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INDIA TODAY

1991 Jan-Feb

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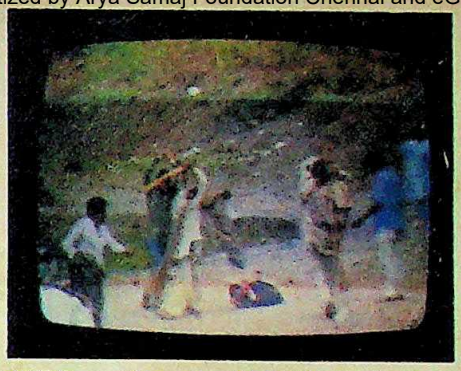
I have often been asked at home and abroad that as Editor of INDIA TODAY *I must be subject to considerable extraneous pressures about what we publish. I have always replied with great pride that in my 15 years at the helm of the magazine I have never had anyone threaten or pressure us with dire consequences if we didn't act according to their wishes. Sadly, after the events of the last fortnight I cannot claim that anymore.*



Still from *Newstrack*'s Meham footage

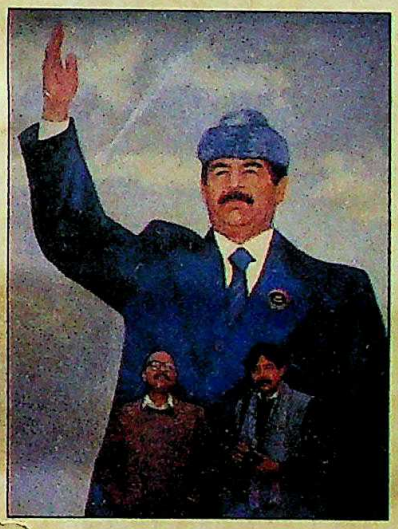
INDIA TODAY *came under attack last fortnight. Not for the first time. But this time there was a vital difference. In the past, we have been abused and criticised, flayed in writing and speech by political leaders of all hues. But never have we suffered physical disruption. This time the attack was brazen, outrageous in its intentions, and vindictive in its motives.*

On January 3 the electricity to our printer and associate company, Thomson Press, located in Faridabad, Haryana, was disconnected without any reason. This was the culmination of a campaign of terror unleashed on the workers of Thomson Press by Lok Mazdoor Sangh, a Haryana-based union patronised by former Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala. Though the attacks had started in June 1990, they accelerated last month when 15 persons were brutally beaten. Admittedly, violent union politics is a commonplace industrial phenomenon today. But when a group of less than 100 workers tries to dislodge a democratically elected union of 1,800 workers by strong-arm tactics, abetted by the local police and administration, and the target is an associate company of a media organisation that has been critical of the powers that run Haryana, things clearly assume a sinister design: cripple the press; put pressure; teach them a lesson.

The reasons for the vendetta were obvious. It was clearly because of the critical reportage by INDIA TODAY *and its video magazine* Newstrack *of the violence and rigging that marked the Meham byelection in February last. In fact, it was the graphic footage of that violence which was instrumental in mounting pressure for the removal of Chautala from Haryana's chief ministership.*

Clearly, the challenges for the media continue to mount. It is bad enough to be threatened by militants, but to be sabotaged by the very representatives of democracy is both shameful and dangerous. Fortunately, such happenings are still only aberrations in our democracy. This was in evidence last fortnight as leaders cut across party lines to unequivocally condemn the attacks. The uproar in Parliament forced the Government to restore electricity to the press. As far as we are concerned, the only way to counter such repression is to keep publishing without fear or favour. Also happily, the correctives in the system still work, for there are enough people committed to ensuring that a free press is not subverted through intimidation. But it calls for constant vigilance to prevent aberrations from becoming the norm.

Gupta and Panjiar in Baghdad



WITH the deadline on the Gulf crisis approaching, and world attention riveted on Iraq, INDIA TODAY *found its persistence finally paying off. After months of dogged pursuit, it became the first Indian publication to obtain visas for Iraq. Features Editor* SHEKHAR GUPTA *and Photographer* PRASHANT PANJIAR *were the first Indian journalists to reach Baghdad, to find a country all geared up for war. Says Gupta: "Despite being neutralised by an eight-year war and the prospect of another destructive war, the spirit of Iraqis is amazing." Communication facilities were poor, and the security very tight. According to Panjiar: "These were the most controlled conditions I've worked in." But they found a considerable degree of warmth for Indians among the public, with the ordinary people calling them 'rafiques', that is 'friends'.*

1991
JAN - FEB

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Cover photograph by PRASHANT PANJIAR

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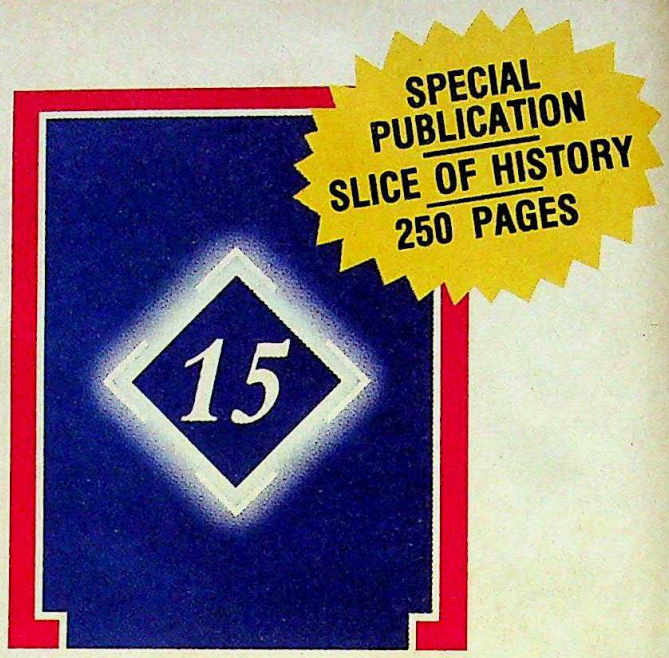

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REIGN OF TERROR

The transition of Bhindranwale from a religious leader to a militant one was engineered by the Government ("The Rule of the Gun", January 15) and, in fact the Punjab problem is mainly the result of political manipulations which have gone out of hand. If the present Government sincerely seeks to return the strife-torn state to even a semblance of normalcy it should accede to all those demands of the militants which do not violate the essence and spirit of the Constitution. The time is right for an accord with the leaders of all militant organisations so that peace can once again be restored in the troubled state.

Ahmedabad — SHIVENDRA N. KAKAR

CLEVER ACT

I admire your cleverness in printing a black and white photograph of the bash at Bhondsi Ashram ("Socialite Evening", January 15) and not a colour one. The politicians are not the only people who fool the public, there are people like you also.

New Delhi — R.K. KHANNA

CHANGE THE SYSTEM

Your story ("Exploiting the Issue", December 31) suggests a divide between the leaders of various political parties and the people they supposedly represent. Recent experience has adequately proved that under a majority rule, aggregation of individual choice may not lead to a socially desirable collective choice. This combined with an emerging breed of regional strongmen may be a prelude to a federal structure. Localisation of political parties is reflected in their inadequate representation in Parliament in order to form a stable government under the present system. Under the federal system, all the problems could have been tackled locally.

Calcutta — SOURABH SEN

UNREPORTED EXCESSES

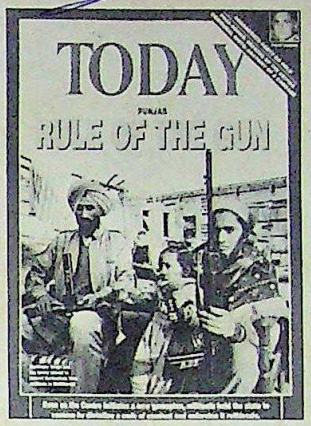
The true picture of the situation in Assam has not been reported ("State of Strife", December 31) by your magazine. Under the pretext of capturing the ULFA, the Indian Army has killed government employees, raped our women and tortured innocent people. Isn't this reason enough for the continued popularity of the ULFA?

Guwahati — D.K. BAROOAH

NOT MUCH OF A SOLUTION

The solutions listed in Comment ("Is there a way out?", December 31) harp on handing the mosque to the VHP. If this happens, a bad precedent will be set and it will have far-reaching consequences. Who will guarantee that there won't be another demand in the coming years for the conversion of other mosques in the country? It is high time we realise that in a multilingual, multicultural nation like ours, the court's verdict must be binding on all groups of people.

Varanasi — PRANAB. K. MUKHERJEE



This is demo'no'cracy or demonocrazy not democracy. It was *aya ram gaya ram* in the '60s; *aya lal gaya lal* in the '70s; an unsuccessful *aya rao gaya rao* in the '80s; and now *aya dal gaya dal* in the '90s.

Ohio, US — A.V. KRISHNA PRASAD

The only solution to the Ayodhya imbroglio is to convert the shrine into a national monument.

Bangalore — K. CHIDANAND KUMAR

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LACKING FOCUS

I read with great interest your business feature on marketing communications ("The Art of the Sell", December 31) and do believe that the article lacks focus. Is it addressing the concerns of people who employ marketing to build their business and giving them new ways of reaching the consumer, or is it warning the readers by positioning the new techniques as a new mouse trap? The article has also not touched upon the way in which the advertising agencies are gearing themselves up to meet the challenge of keeping in touch with the individual consumer.

Bangalore — R. SRIDHAR

■ Unfortunately the techniques of relation marketing are being largely employed to just 'make a sale'. Even in the case of service industries like banks and hotels with greater need to offer a personalised touch and information, one draws a blank and the customer is taken for granted.

Calcutta — RATAN JALAN

GOOD ASSESSMENT

Full marks to Ajit Ninan for his cartoon ("Cartoonscope," December 31), showing Chandra Shekhar growing stronger and finally overshadowing Rajiv Gandhi. Indeed the prime minister is effectively solving the nation's problems. It seems he was correct in saying "the Congress has taken a great risk".

Hyderabad — SUNIL GOGIA

MIXED RELATIONS

Rajiv Gandhi has been referred to as the nephew of the late Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit ("Signposts", December 31) whereas he is her grandnephew.

Calcutta — J.P. GHOSE

SOUR GRAPES

I was appalled to see the review of *Ghanashyam* ("Classical Kitsch", December 15). Classical kitsch is defined in the dictionary as 'trash-art that is pretentious, inferior and in bad taste'. I don't think

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anybody with any knowledge of music will call this work trash.

Filmi! It is obvious that Kavita Shetty is neither a musician nor a dancer. What did she look for from a maestro like Ravi Shankar and a production which featured only classical musicians and dancers? What right had she to comment on coordination? How could she understand the intricacies of the *talas* used—purely classical and folk music.

Kavita Shetty and her like are dwarfs when compared to giants like Ravi Shankar. It's about time people reacted to such biased, ill felt criticism.

New Delhi — SUKANYA RAVISHANKAR

MESSY EXPERIMENT

I was disgusted and furious to read your article on saris ("Exotic Experiments", December 15). Have you ever seen a kimono with cleavage or a backless kilt? We don't want a 'separate legs style', we already have the beautiful Maharashtrian nine-yarder for that. We don't want the 'pankha style', our Bharatnatyam dancers look ravishing with that. Go mad with any attire, but please leave the sari alone.

Allahabad — DAMYANTI RAINA

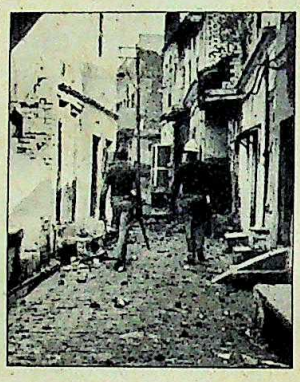
DAZZLING DOTS

Your story on bindis ("Forehead Fantasies", December 15) is but a confirmation of a 'doha' by the 17th century poet Bihari Das. A translation of it would be as follows: everybody knows that by putting a bindi (zero) at the end of a number you increase its value 10 times, by applying a bindi on the forehead of a woman the glow of her beauty is increased an infinite number of times.

Jodhpur — Commander (retd) I.S. BHATI

The Hindu militants' talk of being swamped by the Muslims is nonsense. We should not try to avenge the 'wrongs' of history by repeating the same mistakes.

Palakkad — M. RAJAN



The Jamaat-i-Islami Hind considers communal hatred un-Islamic and believes that the Hindus and the Muslims should have cordial relations.

Hyderabad — WAHEED H. HASHMI

VICIOUS VENDETTA

Arun Shourie is negative and vitriolic in his article ("Why they fall Apart", November 30), and has the temerity to masquerade as a socio-political scientist. In attempting to analyse the fall of non-Congress(I) governments, he has tarred by the same black brush individuals who deserve much better. The entire article is replete with venomous personal attacks and characterisations that justify existing stereotypes of certain classes, at a level that is unacceptable in civilised public life.

New Delhi — HARSHA LOHIT

MATTER OF CONCERN

Your article on the poultry industry ("Spreading its Wings", November 30) caused me great concern. Were you describing what in the West is called "battery farming"? In battery farms here, chickens are cooped up in cages so small that they cannot even spread their wings. An increase in the number of eggs or the weight of the broiler chickens produced by such methods is nothing for Indians to view with pride. We would be copying one of the worst practices of western countries at a time when more and more people in the West are becoming ashamed of it.

Milton Keynes, UK — G.D. JAYALAKSHMI

SUPERFICIAL ANALYSIS

How do you expect a scientist trained for satellite design to look after 'basic problems of drinking water' ("Distorted Priorities", November 30)? All of us are trained for certain jobs and not for all jobs. Instead of going to the roots, you feel happy in blaming the end product.

New Delhi — SANJEEV MALIK

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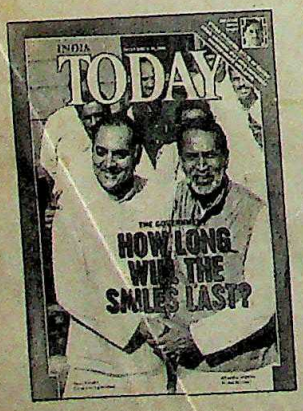

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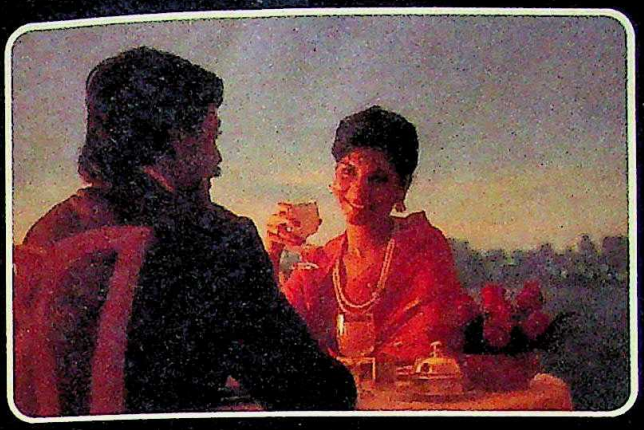
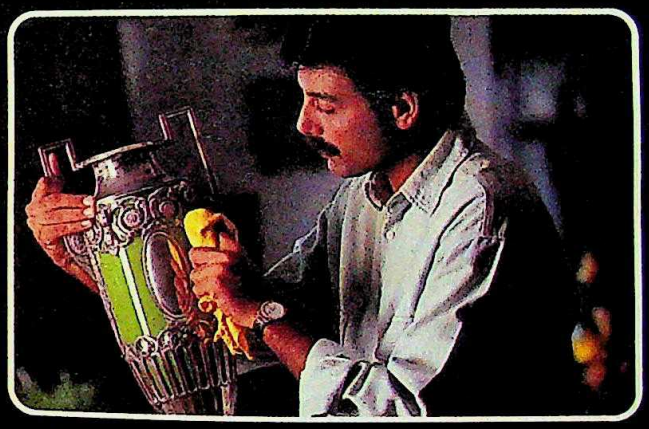


His Evening

His Holiday



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The Rewards of Success

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THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF "FILL IT. SHUT IT. FORGET IT.

The desert is not a friendly place.

Survival here takes either great ability or enormous luck. Or a wise ally. Who knows the ways of the land.

Say hello to the camel.

To all appearances, this strange beast was made to order, something nature designed specially for the desert. By stretching one's imagination, the camel might well be a blueprint for ... a motorbike.

SO LET'S TALK ABOUT CAMELS AND MOTORBIKES.

When Soichiro Honda, the engineering genius and chairman of the Honda Motor Company launched the 50cc 4-stroke Super Cub in

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1958, camels were probably the last thing on his mind.

But the camel is no alien to us in India. Without commenting on its appearance, it's the most dependable form of transport in the sandy wilds, with an unsurpassed ability to carry on and on, for days at a stretch.

The not-so-surprising feature is that the camel requires very little maintenance, content to live on vegetation and the occasional drink of water.

Truly, an outstanding example of a good thing going.

Just like the 4-stroke Hero Honda. (A natural descendant of the Super Cub).

Oddly enough, the sterling qualities of the trusted camel are so similar to that of the Hero Honda.

Maintenance is low, the efficiency is high; and likewise, it's a clear case of "fill it, shut it and forget it" for days and days on end.

Of course, unlike the desert version, the Hero Honda is built with comfort and safety in mind; plus of course a vast improvement in the 'looks' department.

All said and done, to 400,000 owners (plus 10,000 being added each month) it's a good thing going.

So you can raise a toast to the Hero Honda CD 100. Or the camel. Either way, a small one should suffice.

(How's that for economy?)

HERO HONDA

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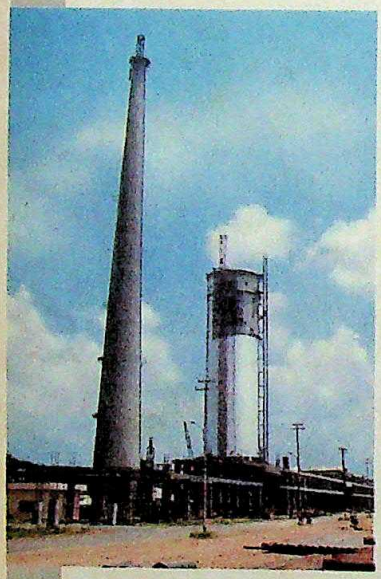
MARCHING AHEAD



TO REAP THE RICHES

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NFCL

Nagarjuna Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited

Nagarjuna Hills, Hyderabad.

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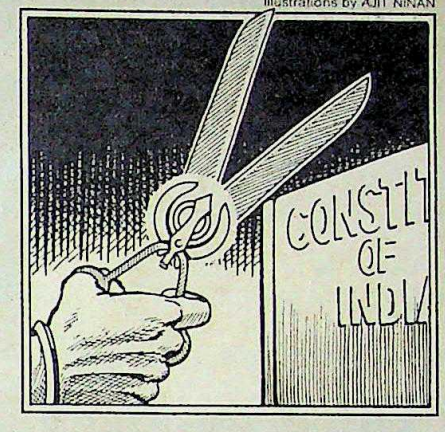
A Dangerous Bargain

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN

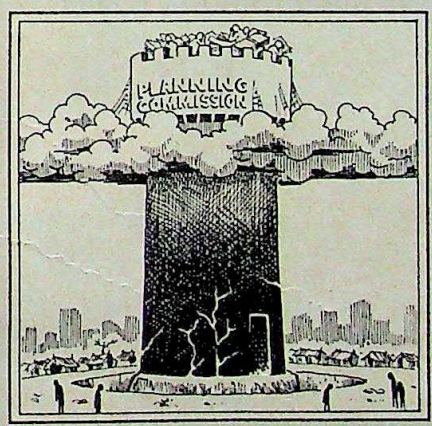


IT is one thing for Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar to go around running the affairs of state pretending he is a truly elected national leader with a genuine mandate. But making sweeping commitments on behalf of the nation is another matter. His offer of making constitutional amendments to accommodate Sikh militants is a blatant example of a prime minister functioning on borrowed time and exceeding his limits at the sufferance of an uneasy ally. Not constitutional limits, maybe. Constitutionally there is no questioning a leader's mandate as long as he can prove his majority in the House. But there are limits imposed by convention and decency even in a democratic set-up as strained as ours.

Chandra Shekhar has done some backtracking since then. That there were no pre-conditions for talks. And that the nation will not be kept in the dark about the parleys. But he is ducking the crucial question: even if the Akalis were to agree to a solution how will he manage to get the Constitution amended? The Left and the BJP are opposed to any such concessions. So is the Congress(I). And amending the Constitution will require a two-thirds majority in not just Parliament but also in more than half of the state assemblies. Chandra Shekhar can never hope to gather that kind of strength. Is he not, then, blundering in making a commitment that he, and the nation, may be incapable of fulfilling? It's time he realised that now he speaks not as a campaign leader but as the prime minister and his word involves a degree of national commitment.

Besides being a democratic impropriety the offer of constitutional amendment is also a tactical blunder. True, India has made peace with insurgents in the past by making minor amendments in the Constitution. But these concessions came as final, face-saving sops for rebels under pressure keen to make their peace. In the case of Punjab, a beleaguered prime minister has offered what should have been his final concession even before the parleys have begun. In the militants' language this means, the Government wants to make peace. If it is beginning the talks with such a major concession let's ask for the moon. Not surprisingly, the move has upset all the other political parties, including the Congress(I). The talks with the Akalis, or even the militants are welcome. But if the precondition is a unilateral offer for a constitutional amendment, it is an avoidable bargain.

Planning Pathos



THE revolving door syndrome has claimed its next victim. The Planning Commission, in just over a year, has seen four deputy chairmen and close to a score ordinary members wafting in, but little more than jaw-jaw has been accomplished. The commission seems to have become a kind of home for bureaucrats and politicians who can't be berthed elsewhere. How else does one explain the entry or exit of T.N. Seshan, a key figure in Rajiv Gandhi's kitchen cabinet, as member-secretary, and the induction of semi-retired Mohan Dharia as the new full-time chieftain?

Meanwhile, the much-worked-over eighth plan (1990-95) shows no signs of surfacing in final form, leading one wag to suggest that the plan may really be what its name suggests: the eighth reincarnation of the same old plan. The first year of the plan is already drawing to a close and policy choices are circumscribed by two realities: the Gulf crisis, and domestic tail-wags-dog political compulsions, courtesy backstage puppeteer Rajiv Gandhi. Since normal budgetary exercises for 1991-92 should already be underway, the next fiscal year's outlaying may reflect the ad hoc priorities of this year rather than Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's reworked Eighth Plan. At best, it will have a three-year ambit.

Does it matter? Till the Gulf troubles came along, the economy was chugging along at a decent clip without plan pointers. More important, is centralised planning relevant anymore? The economic lesson in the Punjab, Kashmir and Assam tangles is this: Delhi is the wrong place for deciding the economic policies of states. If planning there has to be, it is more effectively done closer to the grassroots.

In the Nehru era, the commission was the focal point of a command structure that prioritised spending plans into two halves, the desirable and the undesirable. Thus did it come to influence debates over public and private sector, big and small, self-reliance and imports. Today the commission seems to concern itself primarily with meaningless numbers, which are often off the mark. A decade of movement towards liberalisation, delicensing and fewer controls has altered ground realities. A commission that got things wrong when the state controlled all is unlikely to be better equipped now to predict whether the economy is coming or going. Currently it's difficult to predict even the comings and goings within the commission.

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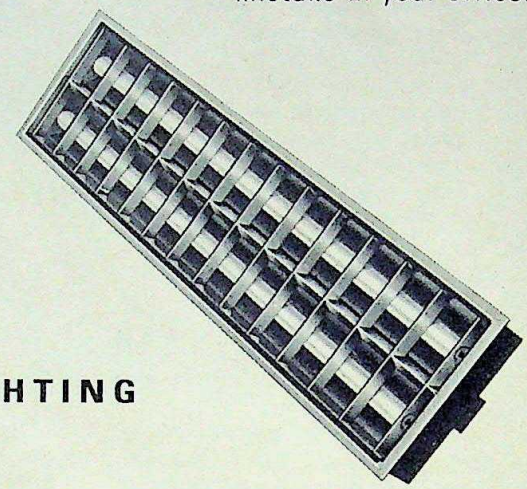

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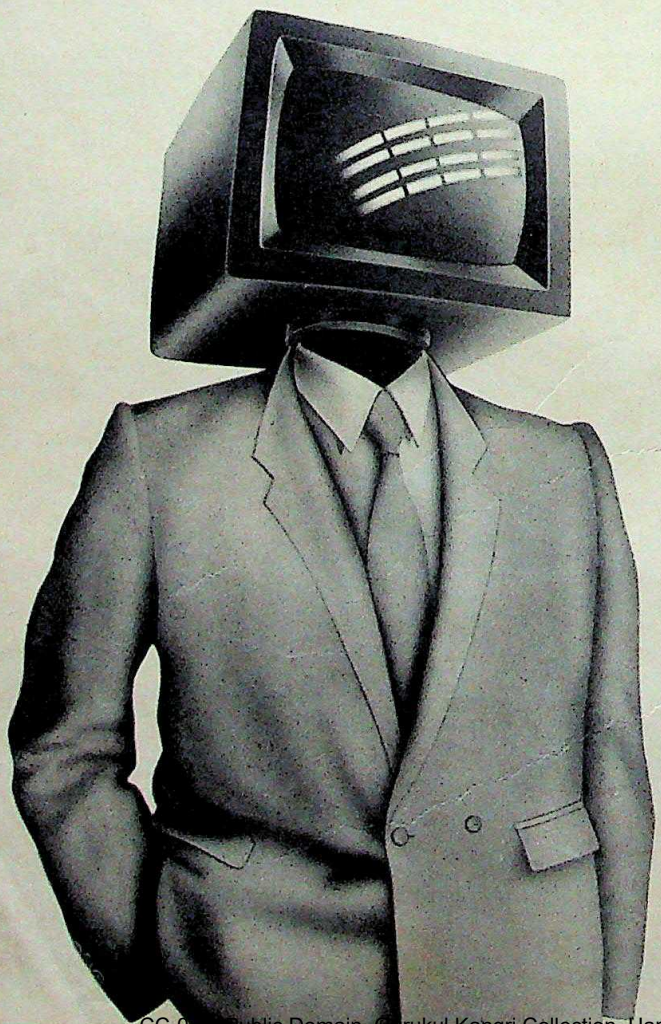

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CAPGAIN DEBENTURES

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Screaming Success

● Rajiv Gandhi and his party may indeed be guilty of keeping a stoic silence and a studious unconcern on the burning issues like Ayodhya and Punjab. However, when

it comes to little issues of pique, there is no mistaking their sensitivity. Particularly when it concerns Rajiv's chivalrous instincts.

On a recent visit to one of Delhi's girls' colleges, Rajiv was approached by some students complaining that they were unable to go on an excursion as railway reservations were not available. Ever so willing to help, Rajiv said he'd ask one of his aides to speak to Railway Minister Janeshwar Mishra.

However, contrary to expectations, Mishra played hard to get. Each time the Rajiv aide called, he was curtly told that Mishra was "busy in a meeting". Even as the minister kept dragging his heels on the issue, the girls kept patiently calling the aide. Finally, his pride stretched to the limit, the aide called Mishra's number and began shouting at the top of his voice explaining the 'stakes' involved—needless to say what that meant. That was enough for the man at the other end to sit up and listen. Obviously, you still have to shout to be heard by those in power even if they are there at your sufferance.

Backyard Politics

● It is a well-worn cliche that politics makes for strange bedfellows. But when it comes to politics Maneka Gandhi-style, it can lead to stranger backyard *tete-a-tetes*. Recently the minister of state for environment raised many political eyebrows when she made a 'secret', unscheduled visit to the residence of Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal—heading straight for the backyard to spend approximately half an hour there.

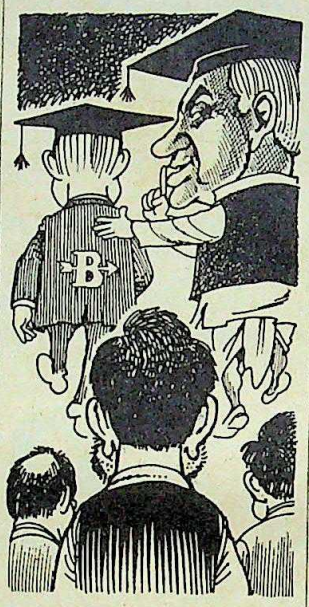
Soon rumour mills were abuzz with speculation about the significance of the visit. But Maneka insists there was no politics to it and she had merely gone to talk to Devi Lal's cow. It seems nobody will ever know what

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

transpired unless it is heard from the cow's mouth.

Surprise Survivors

● Despite the shocks delivered by Chandra Shekhar's bouncers, the last wicket of the V.P. Singh team of Bofors bureaucrats is still holding out. Even after hints from the



prime minister that they'd be removed, Joint Secretary Bhure Lal and Joint Director S. Madhavan are still surviving in the PMO.

The reason why the pair is still holding out is purely political. Having done a quick rethink on the issue, Chandra Shekhar has decided to use the Bofors investigation as his trump card against his increasingly uneasy ally—the Congress(I). If there is any opposition to their continuance in office, it comes from Commerce and Law Minister Subramaniam Swamy. The new president of Bofors was in the economics class in Harvard University with Swamy. But with Bhure Lal and Madhavan still in charge, Swamy might not find it easy to do his old friend a favour by slamming shut the Bofors files.

Batmen Brouhaha

● If the armed forces were recently hitting the headlines for their sexual escapades, they are back in the news: this time it is because of the army headquarters' attempts to scrap the age-old system of batmen.

Some time ago the headquarters decided that the idea behind giving batmen to the officers was to help them maintain their uniforms and the entire panoply of lanyards, epaulettes and medals. Then, why should batmen work at separated family quarters—working as little more than domestic servants for the families of officers doing their time on the border.

So, last month they put a ban on the practice of assign-

ing batmen—partially, at least—even sending out military police to ensure the order was followed. But the officers were up in arms almost before the instructions could land. And the batmen were back. If the headquarters has withdrawn the orders, it is tight-lipped about it. But here is one more pious resolve that has clearly come to nothing.

TAIL PIECE

The latest quip doing the rounds in the capital: What is the height in choosing an appropriate companion?

Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar taking cabinet colleague Sanjay Singh with him to inaugurate a shooting competition in Rajasthan.

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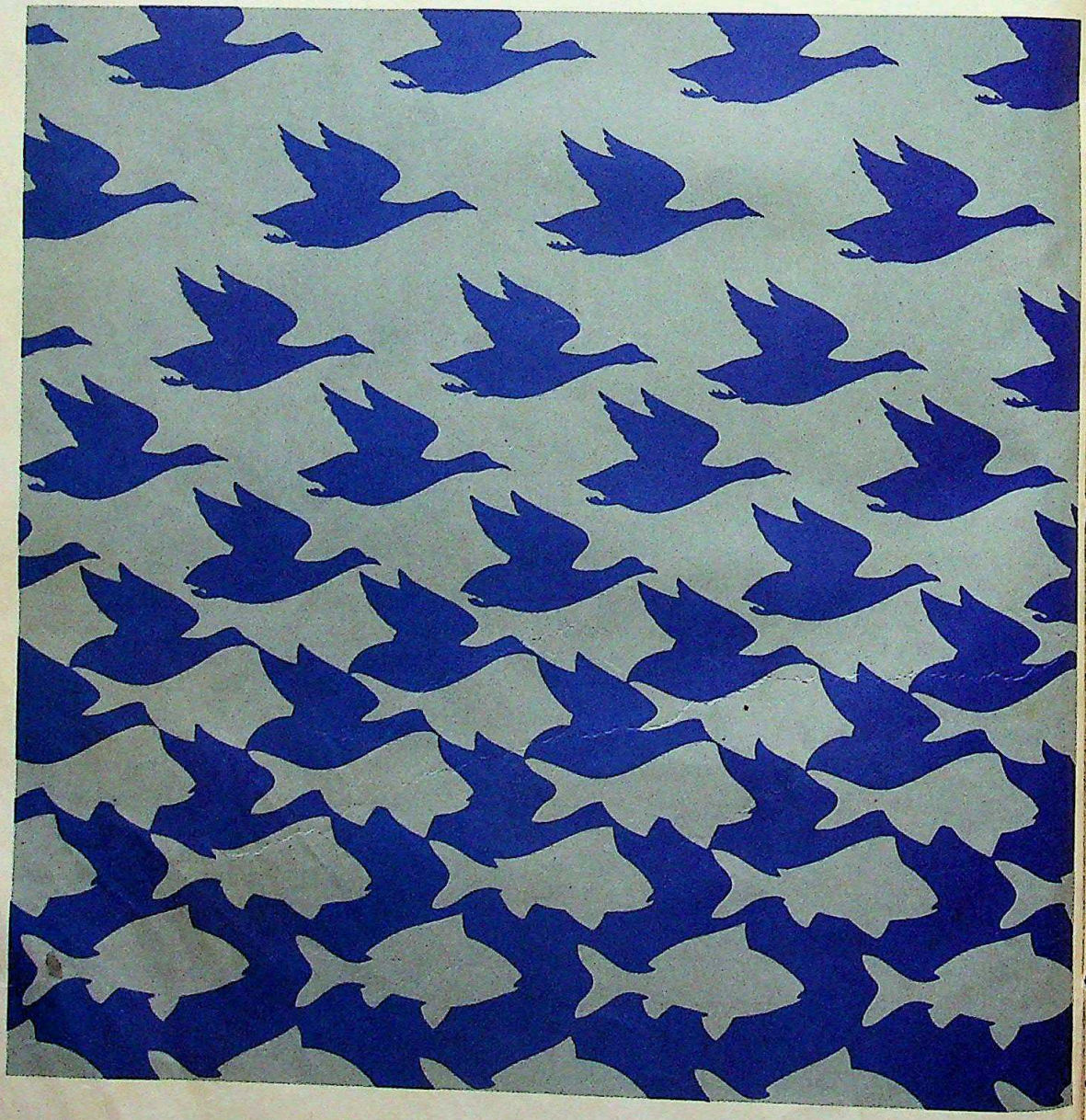
TO UNDERSTAND OUR NEW BUSINESS STRATEGY FOR THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY, STUDY THE PICTURE BELOW.

WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THE PICTURE? ARE YOU SURE?



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Most people see only a flock of birds.

If you look more closely, however, you'll notice a number of fish in the bottom half of the picture.

Much the same thing happens with a business problem. People tend to see only what is obvious.

But when you take a closer look at the problem, you often get a different picture.

Most people looked at the problems of the textile industry and shrugged their shoulders.

We looked at exactly the same problems from a different angle. And saw an industry with a great future.

We couldn't find a word to describe this new way of looking at things. So we invented a word: We called it Renovision.

To fully appreciate how Renovision works, you'll have to understand what the textile industry was up against a couple of years ago.

The root of the problem was a new kind of competition: from thousands of 'powerlooms' that had sprung up all over the country.

These small-scale operations were making fabric at a lower cost than any mill could. And selling it at a lower price.

Most customers found this fabric quite acceptable. So the powerlooms captured a large chunk of the textile market.

A difficult situation? Not if you apply the principles of Renovision.

Sometimes, the best way to solve a business problem is to ignore it.

The conventional point of view said: "We have to find a way to fight the powerlooms."

Renovision made us see it differently: "Why waste our energy fighting the powerlooms?"

Instead, we set out to create our own position of strength: high value, high quality fabrics that could never be made by the powerlooms.

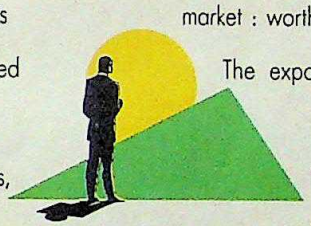
High value fabrics? Our critics laughed. How much high value fabric was it possible to sell in India?

Once again, Renovision showed us a way out.

If your product isn't right for the market, don't change the product. Change the market.

It suddenly became obvious that there was no reason to keep struggling in the Indian market.

Instead, we shifted our attention to the massive export market : worth Rs. 198,000 crores.



RENOVISION: A NEW BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE.

The export market demands long lengths of flawless fabric. And consistency from batch to batch. This is something Arvind is in an excellent position to meet. We've invested heavily in new technology, and have our own R&D facilities.

Arvind. Living proof that Renovision works.

In the last one year, Arvind's sales have grown to Rs. 176 crores. Exports have doubled to Rs. 22 crores.

Reserves are up to Rs. 38 crores. And net profits to Rs. 5.25 crores — an increase of 66%. In the process, our investors' earnings per share have risen to Rs. 7.36.

We've created premium products specially for the export market: like two-ply pinpoint shirtings, superfine cottons and original denim.

And the response from our international customers has been so good, we're soon commissioning a new plant to make denim for export only.

Quite obviously, Renovision is working wonders at the Arvind Mills. From whichever angle you choose to look at it.

Arvind

Trikaya Grey Ogilvy Ahmed 12.90

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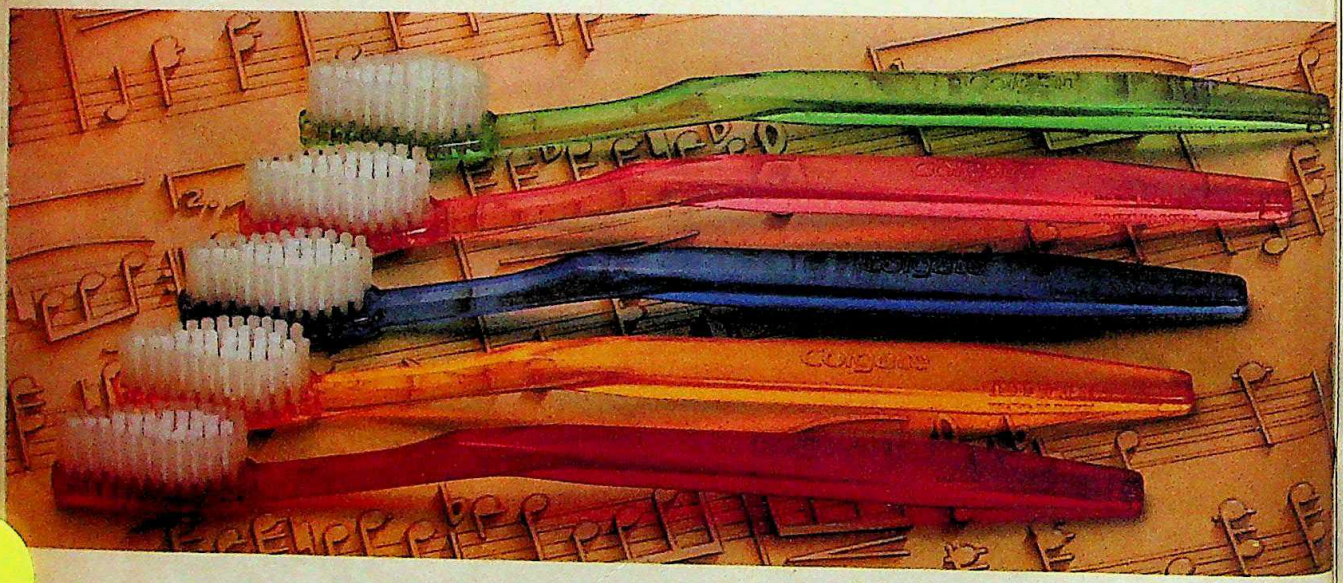
Colgate Plus. The most talented toothbrush you can ever find. Its firm inner bristles and soft outer bristles match each other note for note — one carefully cleaning your teeth, the other gently massaging your gums. Its diamond head glides surefootedly across your teeth, effectively cleaning every corner. Its slim neck provides truly admirable singing support by allowing for manoeuvrability in your mouth.

CHORUS LINE.



Colgate Plus. In an international blister packaging. Available in adult and junior sizes. Colgate Plus. Makes your teeth dance to its song.

Colgate PLUS THE PERFECTLY TUNED TOOTHBRUSH.

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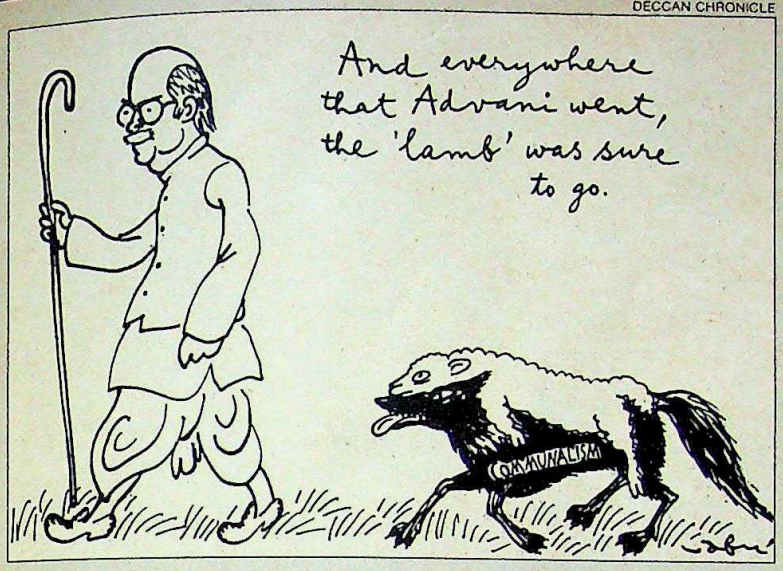
DECCAN CHRONICLE



- *Politics was a hobby which I indulged in when I went into Parliament.*
  ■ KAMAL MORARKA, minister of state in the PMO, in *The Sunday Observer*

- *Nobody is indispensable.*
  ■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR on Mulayam Singh Yadav at a press conference

- *I don't know if he wants women to be burnt as a source of alternative energy.*
  ■ JAYANTI NATARAJAN, Congress(I) MP, alluding to Energy Minister Kalyan Singh Kalvi's sati association, in the Rajya Sabha

- *Had I turned down the invitation for talks by the prime minister, I would have stood denounced internationally.*
  ■ SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN in *The Tribune*

- *We're the only party in the country who are acting as a buffer.*
  ■ L.K. ADVANI in *The Independent*

- *Advani wants to become the king of this country and the rath yatra was intended to be his raj yatra.*
  ■ DEVI LAL at a rally in Ateli, Haryana

- *Today's riots are worse than the 1947 violence. Then, a Muslim knew he could always go back to Pakistan. Today he has nowhere to go.*
  ■ HARKISHAN SINGH SURJEET, CPI(M) politburo member, in *The Sunday Observer*

- *I can do better as a free man. I've interests which are suffering because of my gubernatorial post.*
  ■ BHANU PRATAP SINGH in *The Deccan Herald*

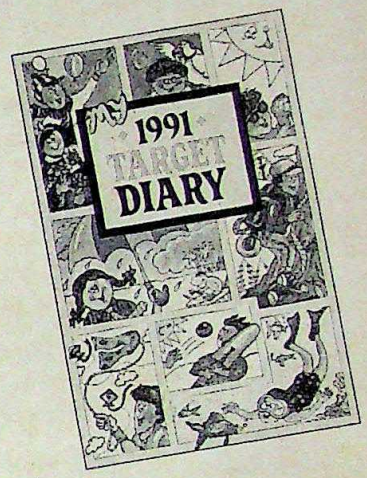
- *I am inundated with calls from women I know, all expressing dismay at the prospect of figuring in my book.*
  ■ KHUSHWANT SINGH in *The Sunday Observer*

- *Maybe the angry young blood has disappeared, now that I have a lady in my life.*
  ■ RAVI SHASTRI in *Sportsworld*

- *I feel that by eating non-vegetarian food a man becomes hot-blooded.*
  ■ GOVINDA in *Showtime*

- *I decided to infuse new life into the stereotyped villain, I think I have succeeded in my effort.*
  ■ ANUPAM KHER in *Current*

YEARLONG GIFTS FOR YOUR CHILDREN



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Cartoons by JAYANTO

TELLING TITBIT

■ Teachers are meant to teach how unholy it is to fudge during examinations. But a professor of a medical college in Punjab, who must have taught such lofty morals to her students through the years, recently ate her own words. Literally.

The story started with the professor's daughter, an MBBS student, who was reported cheating. The professor and her daughter went to the office of the controller of examinations to get a copy of the complaint when he was called away to take a phone call.

This is when the professor acted. Quickly she grabbed the file, crumpled the papers and stuffed them into her mouth, chewed and swallowed them. The intention obviously was to destroy all evidence. However her actions were witnessed by two department employees present in the room.

It remains to be seen if the professor will have to swallow humble pie once the investigations start.

GODLY GLARE

■ Cyclops may have had only one eye and Shiva three but now there seems to be someone with as many as one thousand. Apparently, a many-eyed apparition is giving the people in and around Pondicherry the goose-bumps.

The panic button was first pressed recently when someone claimed that a woman with "eyes all over her face" was walking the villages. Soon the place was abuzz with the rumour that this multi-lidded spectre was in fact the all-powerful goddess Mariamma.

The paranoid populace of the villages promptly went berserk. In an effort to ward off any impending evil spirits they began rushing around madly to get hold of neem leaves—supposedly a favourite of the omniscient goddess. Soon all shops and vehicles were adorned with a string of the bitter leaves.

Clearly, even as we take a step towards the 21st century, the past clings to us in an unsheddable way.

ODIOUS PITCH

■ The age of consumerism has obviously arrived with a bang. And with it have come a variety of mind-boggling products—along with the irksome door-to-door salesmen. If housewives so far have been slamming the door on the face of these pesky peddlers,

now they have even more reason to do so.

Recently, some gullible housewives in Calcutta, in a moment of weakness, gave in to the glib sales pitch of a bunch of smartly attired salesmen. The wares: a wonder-soap that would wash all their troubles away. However, the next day, the women were in for quite a shock. For not only did the detergent not give their clothes that extra sparkle, but, even worse, it stank to high heavens.

And as a nostril-curling stench rose from the fabulous foam, so did the tempers of the women. Obviously a case of the odious by any other name is still being the odious.

HUNTED DOWN

■ As the winter arrives, the hills come alive not to the sound of music but to the crackle of guns. And with the hunting come tall tales of shikar bravado. But such stories don't always have a grand finale. At least that's what happened to a senile shikari from Delhi.

The beginning was innocuous: the elderly enthusiast was soaking in the sun and a gin, with some partridge by his side, when a passerby asked if the birds were his bag. Not to miss a chance to brag, he promptly said yes—though it was nothing of the sort. The incident was soon forgotten.

Much later, he leapt out of his skin on receiving a notice asking him to pay a hefty fine for illegal shooting. Apparently, the nondescript passerby was an officer of the law.

The moral of the story: stick to your own guns and don't shoot your mouth off.

SEEING RED

■ It's not only bulls that don't take too kindly to the colour red. Equally perturbed at the sight of scarlet are the policemen in the district of Mahbubnagar in Andhra Pradesh.

And their antipathy to the sight of red isn't bound by reason—they tend to tar every one in this town with the same brush. As a result, anyone wearing red clothes or carrying a red flag is promptly rounded up and put behind bars. The reason: as the colour is traditionally associated with rebellion, such persons are branded as Naxalites.

And the police are proving to be absolutely unstoppable. Recently they raided the hostel rooms of student activists and seized a few books—only because they were covered in red.

It's only a matter of time before the people see red and actually rebel against this colour prejudice.

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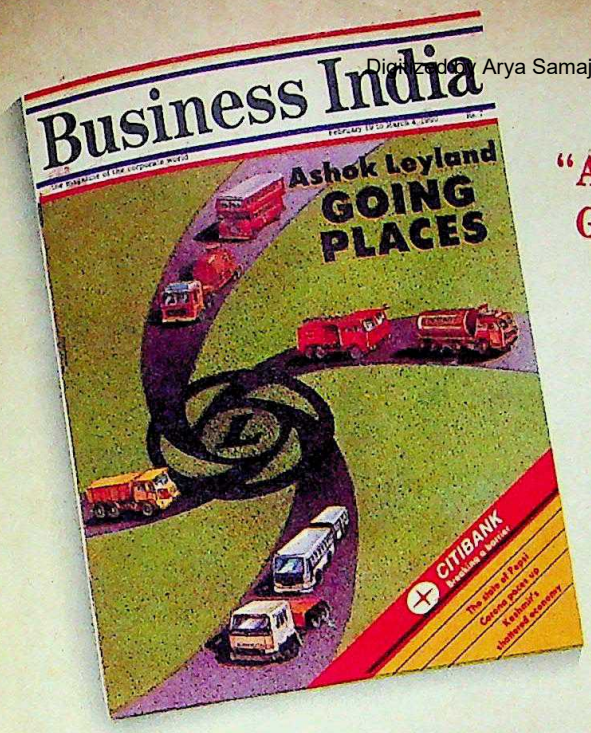

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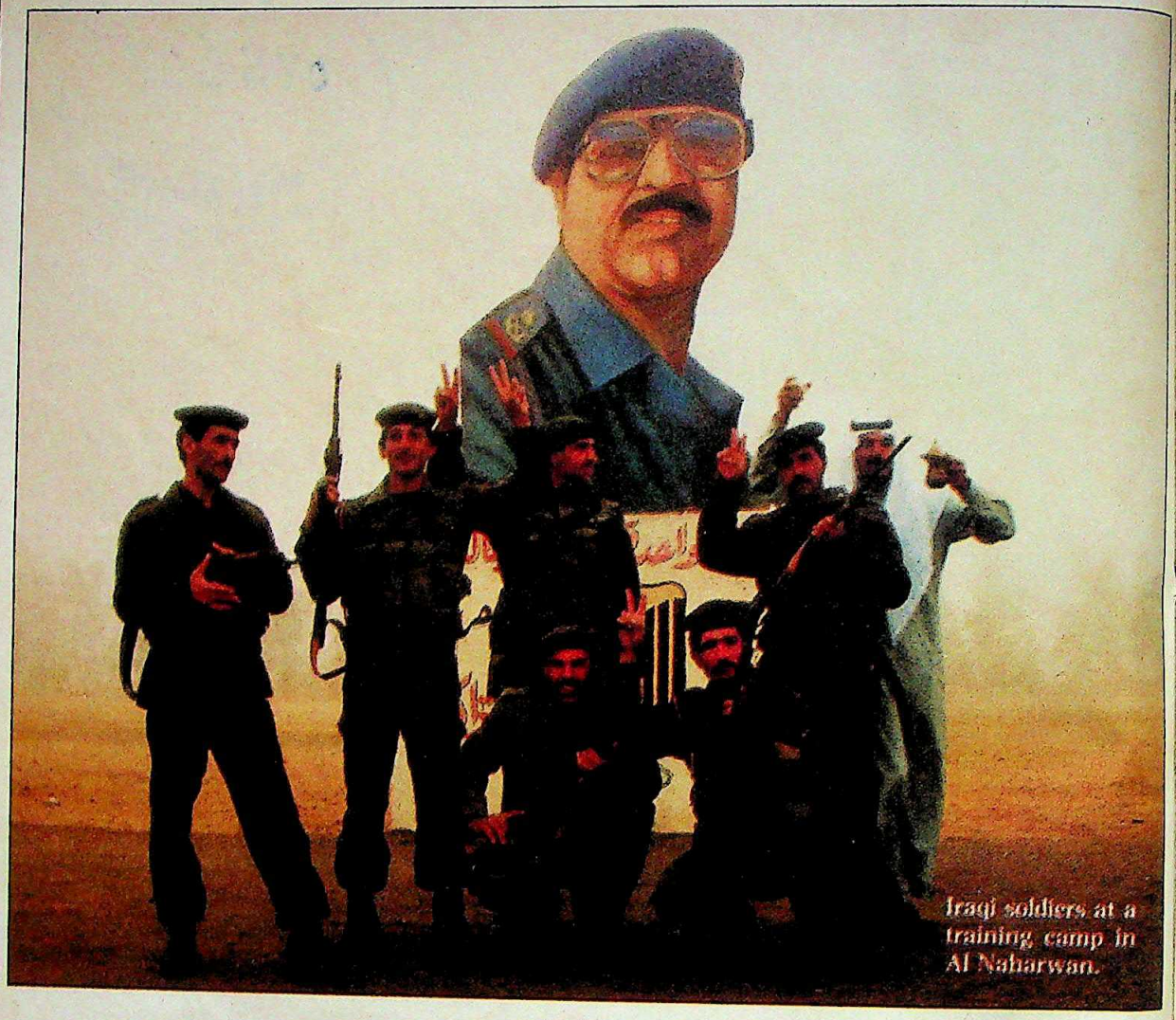

Iraqi soldiers at a training camp in Al Naharwan.

IRAQ

READY FOR WAR

Text: SHEKHAR GUPTA in Baghdad
Photographs: PRASHANT PANJIAR

FOR the capital of a nation recovering from an eight-year war and about to plunge the world into another, Baghdad is a city quite remarkably at peace with itself. There is no sense of impending doom. There is, instead, a hushed excitement. Even anticipation. Instead of being patrolled by tanks, the majestic, wide avenues are clogged with cars. Not heading out of a city facing the spectre of a nuclear attack, possibly within a week, but coursing through its arteries, keeping the ancient city of 3.5 million people throbbing with life.

By the evening many of the cars end up at the restaurants along the Tigris offering *Masgouf*, the exotic, barbecued Iraqi river fish. Many end up at the luxury hotels, night-clubs, casinos and discotheques as the Iraqis live it up—even as the clock ticks towards Armageddon. Not for Baghdad the sobering visions of the blitz, of hundreds of the most modern combat aircraft raining a panoply of bombs and missiles over its imposing, if drab, beige-and-brown skyline. Instead of blackouts, Baghdad gleams at night like a rich European city. The Iraqis have an explanation: "You think we are crazy? We just like to dance on top of the rifles."

Life came surrealistically close to that metaphor last week as the Iraqis celebrated their annual army day. All the hotels and restaurants were jampacked with revellers—mostly soldiers, wives and girlfriends—turned out in their best, drinking, dancing as if life was one long furlough. At the Meridien a reveller summed up the mood: "If I am on the border on the 15th I will be too

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busy fighting to bother about anything. If I am not fighting I will grab a bottle of whiskey in one hand, a rosary in the other." At the parties women outnumbered men three-to-two. A fair ratio considering that Iraq has lost more than a million young men in the war with Iran and another million are facing the US-led coalition troops. And many men danced on artificial legs, often tossing their walking sticks up as if to flaunt the spirit still bubbling in their dismembered bodies. Bizarre, may be. But so is Iraq today.

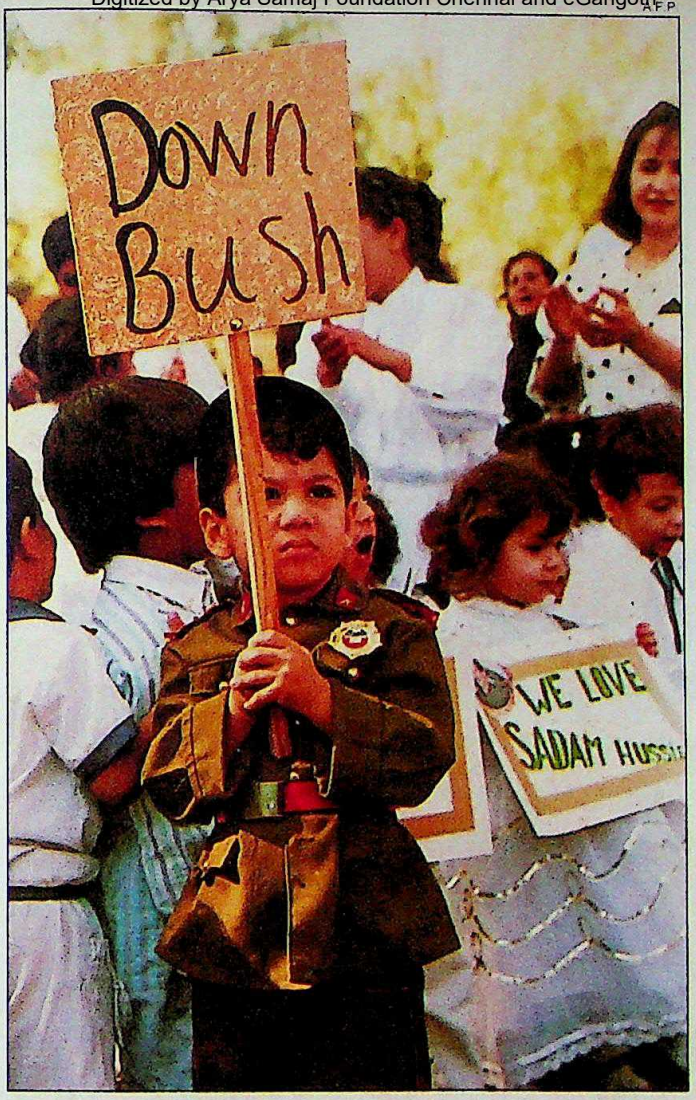
Illustrative of the surreal atmosphere in Baghdad are the the FM radio broadcasts. Western music broadcasts are interspersed with news highlights. Suddenly, from relaying a news item about Iraq having readied Hawk missile batteries to shoot down American aircraft and Saddam saying that the "Americans will swim in their own blood" the compere announces "over to Tina Turner".

The Iraqis are not crazy. They are just a bit desensitised to war. A battle-inoculated society, as they often call themselves, with evident pride. So last week, as the Geneva talks between US Secretary of State James Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz ended in disaster and a virtual declaration of war, the Iraqis did not lapse into collective mourning, panic, or prayer. With clinical, almost detatched elan, they went about preparing for war. Soviet-made ZSU-234 anti-aircraft guns were hauled up on the buildings and the skyline along the approaches to the city bristled with missile batteries. There was just a hint of nervousness as rumours of a ban on petrol sale began doing the rounds and thousands of cars lined up at the petrol pumps. Elsewhere it seemed like business as usual.

The Saddam International Airport continued to have its daily air raid exercises. The artillery-men manning the cannons atop the arch at the entrance of the Presidential palace were a bit stiffer than usual, the number of sentries on street corners—all carrying the ubiquitous Kalashnikov—had gone up. Beyond that the panic seemed confined to the last remaining members of the expatriate community and the diplomatic corps. Overnight a dozen embassies had closed down and the others were in the process of locking their gates. The flights out of the country—to Amman, as Jordan is the only country still keeping its air space open for Iraqi aircraft—were packed. Moving out also was Joseph Wilson, the US acting ambassador who had claimed only a day earlier that he felt "perfectly safe". So safe that he had not even removed the pictures and paintings from his walls. With the die cast, for the foreigners it was time to cut their losses and flee.

The problem is the Iraqis have nowhere to go even if they wanted to. In more than two decades of Baath Party rule one of the privileges the Iraqis have been absolutely denied is foreign travel. Even Saddam Hussain himself will not qualify for a frequent flyers' club: the last time he left the shores of the Arab world was 1972. So the Iraqis were getting ready for what their leader had termed, with characteristic flourish, the "Mother of all battle"—a holy Islamic Jehad against the infidels, a revolutionary war against imperialists and the last battle for a battered nation's pride all rolled into one. However else the world may ultimately judge Saddam Hussain—a tyrant, megalomaniac or the Hitler of the '90s—there was no denying the charisma which had so fired the imagination of his people. So much so that they actually seemed to be looking forward to "the last battle" following Saddam's call to make "the Americans swim in their own blood".

More remarkably, the enthusiasm for a war, which could only end in the destruction of Iraq, cut across all social and economic lines. On the outskirts of

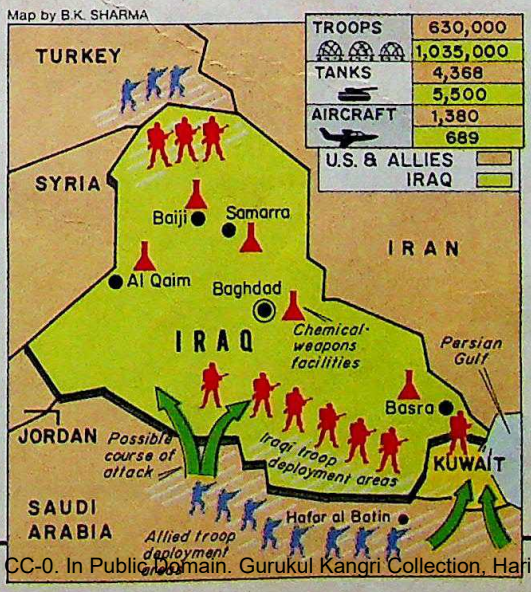


AFP

Children demonstrating at the US Embassy in Baghdad

In the popular mind it is Bush vs Saddam

Map by B.K. SHARMA



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Artistes demonstrating against the West outside the British Embassy in the Iraqi capital

Orchestrated demonstrations are a daily affair and help to keep tension high

POWER STRUCTURE

Baathist Domination

IN Iraq there is no pretence of separating party from government. The entire power structure is controlled by the Baath Party and in many ways the system resembles that of the former East European communist regimes. However, there are differences.

For example, the domination of the supreme leader, Saddam Hussain, in this case, is much greater. The bureaucracy is generally kept out of the party's control but more than two-thirds of its members are believed to be Baathists.

In the armed forces it is considered a crime to become a member of any political organisation other than the Baath Party.

The party's hold at the grassroot levels is maintained through its large membership—at least a million and half. If the average size of an Iraqi family is taken to be five it means that half the population is directly affiliated to the party.

"It is a conspiracy of the US to make two Muslim nations fight."

SADI MEHDI SALEH
Speaker, National Assembly

"If the Americans attack it will be the most suicidal thing."

IZZAT IBRAHIM
Vice-Chairman, RCC

The party itself runs on a very tight cellular system.

The supreme decision-making body is the seven-member Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) headed by Saddam Hussain. In a way it is modelled after the communist politburos, but unlike the systems in China and the Soviet Union, rarely does an RCC member gather the courage to even question Saddam.

Most of his aides tend to be in the same age group as him—50 to 55 years—and came up with him through the party structure and the various revolutions. He also happens to hold both the post of President and that of prime minister. It is believed that power is controlled by the troika of Saddam, his vice-president Izzat Ibrahim and first deputy Prime Minister Taha Yasin Ramadhan.

So controlled is the Iraqi system that even biographical details on the key leaders are rarely published.

A list of the key power people in Baghdad:

▶ **Izzat Ibrahim**, 55, vice-chairman of the RCC and vice-president. He is an old party cadre who specialised in agrarian policies. A law graduate from Baghdad University, he is said to control the intelligence organisations. He

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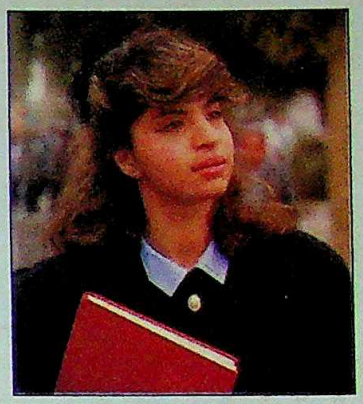
the city, Safa Mohammed, a veteran of six battles in the Southern Marshes, bares his amputated left leg defiantly and then his good, right leg and picks up an axe lying at a roadside stall. "I gave one leg in the war against Iran. I will give the other in this war. But watch as I chop *Boosh* into pieces." The axe comes down in swinging motions as Safa's face acquires a morbid crimson hue.

There is more crimson some 40 km away in the professor's chamber of the English department at the spanking Mustansiriya University campus in Baghdad. If the university, set up in 1963 to mark the Baath Party's first coming *(see box)*, is the ideological cradle of the political elite, Salman Al Wasiti is its proud show-piece. The nondescript professor of Victorian poetry could easily pass off as a clerk. But his credentials are impeccable: a Masters from Iowa, and a Ph.D from Birmingham. And the Government likes to flaunt him, making a meeting with him mandatory on the schedule of visiting scribes. Al Wasiti is a soft-spoken hawk who measures his words carefully. He is defensive about nothing, the daylight robbery in Kuwait or his government's stockpile of chemical weapons. "If you want to talk about balance of terror, go ahead. We are proud of it." He predicts a confrontation. "We are sitting on a lake of oil. We will burn it. We will also go with it," he says. And then he proceeds to quote from the Bible: "It is better to be a dead lion than a living dog."

AL Wasiti also articulates the secret of Saddam's success. It lies primarily in awakening not only a feeling of national identity but also Arab pride. In the past the whole world thought of the Arabs as bumbling idiots. Saddam's Arabs have shown the world they can be smart and savvy. The Iraqi ideologue believes that this notion also lies at the root of all trouble with the West. The West, with all its armies and legions of Arabists and experts, has always mentally catered for an Arab world full of scheming, illiterate sheikhs so easy to bribe and manipulate.

The Iraqis have presented the West with a different kind of Arab. One typified by their extremely charming—and Christian—Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz



ZAINAB AHMED
STUDENT

"I lost my uncle and brother in the earlier war. I don't know who will die in this one."

is believed to be seriously ill—some diplomats believe that he is suffering from leukaemia.

▶ **Taha Yasin Ramadhan**, 55, first deputy prime minister. He was a former major in the army from where he was ousted before the revolution. He has been minister of industry.

▶ **Tariq Aziz**, 53, foreign minister and the smooth, suave, urbane face of the regime. A graduate from Baghdad University, majoring in English Literature, he rapidly rose through the ranks of the Baath as a prominent writer and ideologue. He founded the party newspaper *Al Thawra* along with Naji Al Hadithi, who is the Government's current chief spokesman. He also has the distinction of being the only Christian in the power structure.

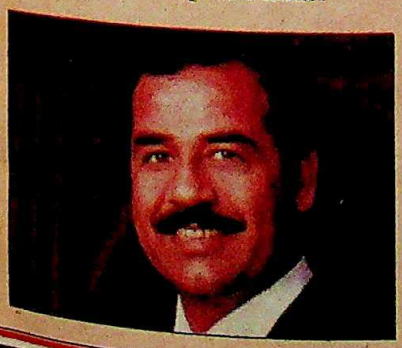
▶ **Sadoun Hamadi**, deputy prime minister and a specialist in economic affairs. He has the additional charge of inter-Arab affairs. A graduate of the American University in Beirut, his role is not very well defined but he is however, believed to have a major say in matters concerning agriculture and foreign policy.

▶ **Taha Mahiuddin Marouf**, 60, is the only member of the RCC who is not a member of the ruling Baath Party. He belongs to the minority Kurd tribe from the north and was also an ambassador to Italy.

▶ **Hussain Kamil Hassan**, around 40, and widely believed to be the possible heir-apparent to his father-in-law, Saddam Hussain. He is a former army officer and one of Saddam's most trusted aides. Given the most vital portfolio of military industry besides those of general industry and oil, he also serves as the co-chairman of the Indo-Iraqi Joint Commission.

▶ **Sadi Mehdi Saleh**, 54, Speaker of the National Assembly and the chief of the popular army, a large militia dominated by party cadres. A secretary-general of the Baath Party, he is a childhood playmate of Saddam from his hometown of Tikrit and is believed to be on the rise.

Saddam: supreme leader



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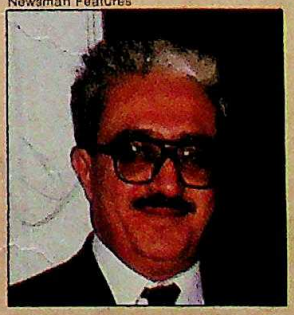

"In case of war be sure that our very first target will be Israel."
TARIQ AZIZ
Foreign Minister

◆

"Muslims all over the world must fight American infidels."
TAHA YASIN RAMADHAN
First Deputy Prime Minister

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MD SAEED AL SAHHAF
MINISTER OF STATE

"If Israelis kill three million of us there will still be fifteen million Iraqis left. If we use chemical weapons there won't be one Israeli left."

SYED ASHOOR
FISH SELLER

"The whole thing is the result of a Zionist conspiracy, and we are left with no other choice but to fight our last battle."

who is often considered to come out one better than Baker on American television. Another in the same genre is Naji Al Hadithi, the Government's chief spokesman, Baath Party ideologue and editor-in-chief of the *Baghdad Observer*, Iraq's only English daily. He sits hunched on his desk, often stealing a glance sideways through his Christian Dior glasses at the television set, one of the dozen-odd in Baghdad still receiving the 24-hour American news channel Cable News Network (CNN). Says he: "The problem with the Americans is they have dealt for too long with only illiterate thieves of the desert. Bedouins, pirates, rotten and ruined sheikhs. They don't know how to deal with an Arab who is not an idiot. They can't understand us." It is also because the West cannot understand the East, he says, that war may be inevitable. "For us, face is important. Bush can give us a deadline one day and negotiate the other. Saddam cannot come back from Kuwait and face his people." He does not talk of victory. He talks of denying victory to the Americans. "We have learnt a lot from the Arab-Israeli wars. We will not let anyone get away with a short, speedy war. This will be an open-ended war all over the world between the Arabs and Muslims at one end and the US and Israel on the other. That is the final equation."

Last fortnight, the "equation" was being underlined by everyone who mattered in the Iraqi-establishment: if war begins the first Iraqi missiles, tipped with chemical and biological warheads, will head for Israel. Maybe 50-60 at a time. How many will the anti-missile defences shoot down? The Israelis will perhaps incinerate Baghdad with their nukes. "So what? We have calculated for that," says Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and former ambassador to India, Mohammed Saeed Al Sahhaf. "How many of us will the Israelis kill? Three million? There will still be 15 million Iraqis. If our binary chemical weapons kill three million, there won't be one Israeli left." For one who is living bang on ground zero these are brave words. However that is the mood prevalent in Saddam's establishment.

THE mood out in the streets is a bit more difficult to judge accurately. Three decades of revolutions and Baathist control have turned Iraq into a closed society where almost no one has the courage to talk independently. Journalists are not encouraged to go out at all without officially-provided "interpreters" and requests for visiting any part of the city have to be cleared in advance. Yet it is not difficult to see that while the common Iraqi is in no mood to surrender to the US, the economic and trade sanctions have driven him to near desperation. In theory, everything is still

SADDAM HUSSAIN

The Pan-Arabic Champion

LIKE India, Iraq is an ancient civilisation but a young nation. The fertile plain between the Euphrates and the Tigris was the cradle of the Mesopotamian civilisation in 6,500 BC. Having the region's richest land, Iraq was the target of many invaders—from Alexander to the Ottomans to the British. In the 7th century, after the devastation of the Persians, the Abbasid Caliphate ruled Iraq. Under Haroon Al Rashid, Baghdad became the region's cultural and commercial capital. But the Caliphate was destroyed by Mongol invaders.

After centuries of anarchy, it was only in 1920 that Iraq acquired some kind of cartographic identity as a British mandate. The British tried to rule Iraq through a stooge in King Faysal. After yet another British occupation in the 1941-45 period, it was only in the late-'50s that Iraq acquired a reasonably stable government under Abdul Karim Qasim. By now a new force had risen in the Arab world and Iraq, with a socialistic, virtually secular Pan-Arabic agenda. The Baath (resurrection) Party first rose on the campuses of Damascus and Cairo and spread to the whole Arab world. It stressed the need for a Pan-Arabic movement as Islam, with its inter-sect differences, was considered an inadequate unifying factor. Its goal was the merger of all the Arab lands into one nation.

The Palestinian issue came up as the party was launched on April 4, 1947 and provided its very *raison d'etre*. As its support was eroded in Egypt under Nasser's influence, it struck deep in Iraq's urban centres.

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Iraqi armoured vehicle being moved up to the Saudi Arabian border

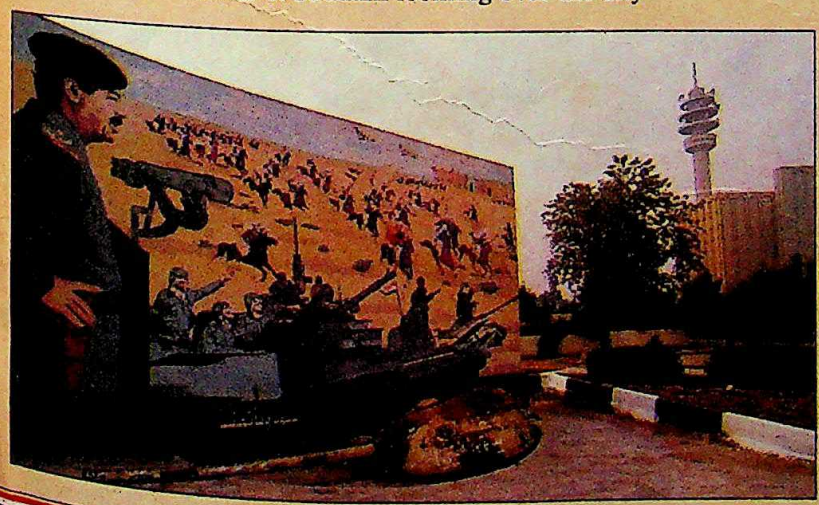
The stand-off has been accompanied by the biggest military build-up since World War II

As the party was banned in Iraq, it was a clandestine underground organisation that Saddam Hussain joined in the mid-'50s. In October 1959, he made an attempt on the life of prime minister Qasim, failed out acquired a hero's status by fleeing to Syria with a wounded leg. He gravitated to Cairo, became a Nasser protege, graduated from the university there and returned to Iraq to continue his clandestine work. On February 8, 1963 the party overthrew Qasim but its own rule lasted just nine months. This was followed by large-scale persecution of party workers. In July 1968 the party, with Saddam in the vanguard, seized power again—and it hasn't looked back since then. In Syria too the Baathist army officers took control.

A Baathist infrastructure exists in almost all Arab states barring Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It is this Baathist constituency that Saddam is aiming at in his quest for predominance over the Arab world. The route he has chosen is partly a show of brute military muscle and partly a claim to be the foremost champion of the Palestinian cause. It is because of this—the Baath movement's Pan-Arab nature and its vulnerability to Saddam's pull—that the rival Arab states live in dread of him today.

Saddam Stresses Pan-Arabism as the unifying force

Portrait of Saddam looming over the city



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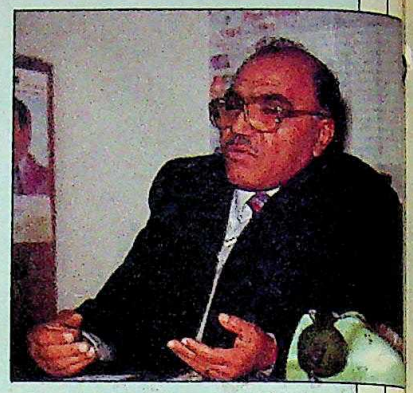
available. In practice, everything costs 10 to a 100 times more than it did before August 2, the day Saddam decided to make Kuwait "the 19th province of Iraq". Wheat flour, the Iraqis' staple, has gone up nearly a 100 times, sugar 30 times as much and cooking oil has quadrupled. Moreover, tea, which the Iraqis are so fond of, will soon become the first essential commodity to go out of the market. That is as soon as the last cartons of tea-bags brought from Kuwait as war booty are sold out from the black market. True, there is no dearth of meat and vegetables which are grown locally. The last of the chickens are being slaughtered and soon there will be no eggs as well. Three months ago you could get two dinars for a dollar in the black market against the official rate of $3.3 for a dinar. Today you can get up to seven dinars—23 times the official rate.

WESTERN diplomats are still not satisfied. Iraqis have been conditioned by the eight-year-war to hoard and live with scarcities, as they say. Or that the Iraqi economy will not crash, it will grind to a halt like the economies of scores of African countries. Saddam could live with that. The average Iraqi does not look at it that way. For him things are disappearing fast. The shelves are full of electronics, fancy brand-named clothing and watches all looted from the stores in Kuwait. Food is another matter—a hotel has coffee one day, only lemonade the next. On the incoming Iraqi Airways flight you may get sugar and milk with tea. Going back you do without milk. Next week there will probably be no sugar.



SALMAN AL WASITI
PROFESSOR

"We are sitting on a lake of oil. We will burn it. We will also die but it is better to be a dead lion than a living dog."

In the Saddam City Medical Teaching Hospital at least three children are dying every day because of malnutrition—there is no milk in the markets—and pharmacies have empty shelves. There are no pain-killers, no antibiotics, no antihypertensives. "This country has been ravaged by war for so many years. We have so much psychiatric illness. And we have no tranquilisers," says Anwar Khalil, 68, and owner of a pharmacy on Al Rashid Street, staring wistfully at three customers at his shop, each clutching a prescription from a consulting psychiatrist. This, indeed, is the most cruel fact of life in Iraq. If there is war, the Iraqis may fight to the bitter end and deny the West a cost-effective victory. If there isn't war they could be grounded and starved into defeat. The Government promises that things will improve when the harvest comes. But the harvest is four months away. That is why the desperate wooing of Iran

Soldiers paying homage to comrades killed in the Iran-Iraq War

Despite losing a million lives, Iraqis are fogetting the war

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Thiru **R. Santhanam**, IAS Director	Secretary to Govt. of Tamil Nadu Transport Department	13, 8th Cross Street Shastri Nagar, Adyar Madras-600 020
Thiru **M.A. Gowrishankar**, IAS Director	Special Secretary to Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Finance Department	No.14, II Main Road Gandhi Nagar, Adyar Madras-600 020.
Thiru **A.P. Bhatikar**, IAS Director	Managing Director Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corpn. Ltd.	1E South Bay Terrace 1st Main Road Gandhi Nagar, Adyar Madras-600 020.
Thiru **K. Subramanian**, BE Director	Managing Director Thiruvalluvar Transport Corpn. Limited	P.No.2717, 7th Street, Y Block, 12th Main Road Anna Nagar West, Madras-600 040.
Thiru **R. Rathinasabapathy** BE, MBA, FIE. Director	Director Institute of Road Transport	T.S.No. 42/2, Kalaimagal Nagar (W), Ekkattuthangal Madras-600 097.
Thiru **M. Jeyaraj**, BE, M.Sc., (Engg) FIE. Director	Director Motor Vehicles Maintanance Organisation	AL 105, 3rd Street 11th Main Road Anna Nagar, Madras-600 040.
Dr. R. Ganesan, Ph.D. Director	Managing Director Pallavan Transport Consultancy Services Ltd.	Plot No. 269, 17th East Street, Kamaraj Nagar Thiruvanmiyur Madras-600 041.
Thiru **R.K. Sharma**, IAS Managing Director	Joint Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu Transport Department	No. 8, Krishna Apartments 2A, Warren Road, Mylapore Madras-600 004.

f. Profits of the Company before and after making provisions for tax, for the three financial years immediately preceeding the date of advertisement.

(Rs. in lakhs)

	Profit Before tax	Profit after tax
1987-88	**11.20**	**5.32**
1988-89	**10.98**	**5.21**
1989-90	**17.95**	**10.75**

g. Dividends declared by the Company in respect of the said years. **NIL**

h. Summarised financial position of the Company as appearing in the latest audited Balance Sheet:

(Rs. in lakhs)

LIABILITIES	As at 31st March 1990	1989	ASSETS	As at 31st March 1990	1989
Share Capital	581.00	556.00	Fixed Assets	9.74	4.10
Share Deposit	—	25.00	Investments	5.00	5.01
Reserves and Surplus	97.37	86.62	Current Assets	1142.06	1025.78
Secured Loans	802.00	934.80	Loans and Advances	16777.02	14925.29
Unsecured Loans	14662.54	12475.37			
Current Liabilities and Provisions	1790.91	1882.39			
Total	17933.82	15960.18		17933.82	15960.18

i. The Company can raise deposits under Reserve Bank of India directions upto a maximum of Rs. 67.84 crores based on capital structure on 31.3.90. The aggregate of the deposit held on the last day of the year immediately preceeding the financial year for the above purpose is Rs. 49.16 crores.

j. There are no overdue deposit other than the unclaimed deposits.

k. DECLARED

i. that the Company has complied with the provision of the Directions of the Reserve Bank of India applicable to it.

ii. that the compliance with the Directions does not imply that the repayment of deposits is guaranteed by the Reserve Bank of India; and

iii. that the deposits accepted/renewed by the Company are unsecured and rank *pari passu* with other unsecured liabilities.

l. The advertisement is issued on the autonly and in the name of the Board of Directors of the Company, the text of which was approved by the Board on 27.9.90 and a copy of it has been filed with the Regional Office of the Department of Financial Companies, Reserve Bank of India, Bangalore.

(On behalf of and as authorised by the Board of Directors)
For Tamil Nadu Transport Development Finance Corpn. Ltd.
R.K. Sharma
Managing Director

- **TAMIL NADU TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED (TDFC) is a fully owned Government Company.**
- **This company is managed by the Board of Directors nominated by the Government, mostly senior I.A.S. Officers.**
- **The total deposits have crossed Rs. 167 crores.**
- **TDFC enters international arena. RESERVE BANK OF INDIA has permitted TDFC to accept Non-Resident Indian deposits on non-repatriation basis.**
- **TDFC provides full security for your investment.**
- **No bad debts or write-off in the last 15 years.**
- **TDFC accepts both individual and institutional deposits on attractive terms and provides prompt service.**
- **TDFC has been making profits since inception.**

DIPR/7/MS/91/ELEGANT

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Iraqi soldiers and their families participating in army day celebrations

The history of violence and strife has made Iraqis a battle-inoculated people

last fortnight when Vice-President Izzat Ibrahim went to Tehran seeking food and defiance of sanctions by a 'brotherly Muslim state'.

If the turnaround on Iran is dramatic what is most amazing is the Government's audacity to drive a whole country into a phase of collective amnesia on a war that ended barely a year ago, devoured the flower of the nation's youth and bled its treasury dry. When the war was on, it was a good war—

INDIANS

Another Rescue Operation

BARELY two months after one nightmare ended another one seems about to begin in the Gulf. As the region seemed drawn inexorably towards confrontation the Government was drawing up contingency plans to evacuate 1.2 million expatriate Indians from the Gulf. Complicating matters is the possibility that several major airlines are cancelling flights in the region and the sea lanes are likely to be closed.

While the Ministry of External Affairs braced for the contingency, the 2,900-odd Indians still stuck in Iraq—mainly workers with Indian construction companies, nurses and workers at Baghdad hotels—waited till January 10 for the outcome of the Geneva talks. But as James Baker announced the failure of the talks desperate travel plans were being drawn.

One group of workers drove to the Jordan border. But for several days it was stuck in a temporary camp 50 km from Amman while formalities for departures were completed. Ambassador Gajendra Singh says the embassy is getting ready for more "guests".

Some of these could be the 126 Indian nurses stuck in Baghdad hospitals. For the past fortnight they've been coming and sitting in the embassy compound, seeking help in getting exit visas without which no one can leave Iraq. And employers are generally unwilling to give clearance for an exit visa. Legally the Indians have a poor case. Very few have completed the minimum period of their contract. The embassy is trying to help by pleading their case with the employers and also the Iraq Government.

Either way the Indian workers face ruin. No remittances made during the past nine months have reached India. Now no remittances are allowed as international banks are all boycotting Iraq because of the sanctions. Worse, the workers can barely survive on their wages because of the threefold inflation in five months. As they have no dollars they cannot buy air tickets out of Baghdad to Amman nor can they apply for visas to Turkey which have to be paid for in foreign exchange. "We are ruined," says Bina Simon, who left her job at the capital's All India Institute of Medical Sciences to join the Saddam City Hospital. Worse, the three-month food stocks supplied by the embassy have run out.

The nurses' daily dharna has led to some tensions. The embassy officials point out that the only way they can get exit visas is by pleading with the Government that either the nurses or someone in their families back home is sick. But apparently, a group of nurses did that—only to join the Irish hospital. "It really leaves us with no moral leg to stand on vis-a-vis the Iraqis," said the official.

With the Jordan border closed and

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Saddam Qadissiya as it was called with reference to the great battle of Qadissiya in 637 AD when the Arabs decimated the Persians to set up the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Today it is supposed to be forgotten as a bad dream or, as Sadi Mehdi Saleh, Speaker of the National Assembly and childhood playmate of Saddam from his home town of Tikrit says, "a conspiracy of the US and the West to make two Muslim nations fight and weaken each other". The war is not even talked about. Visiting scribes and photographers are firmly forbidden to talk to the hundreds of cripples of the war walking the streets.

Yet there is a reminder of the war at every street corner. A mural on Palestine Street showing a soldier descending by parachute, in various phases of fighting, tied to a tree and shot, apparently as a prisoner of war by the Iranians, and then flying heavenwards on wings of angels. Two awesome memorials where the top brass lined up to lay wreaths on the army day and stood sombrely as the last post was sounded.

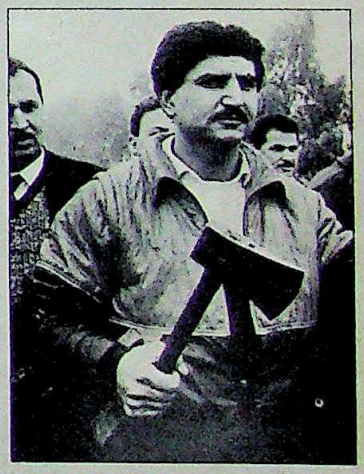
The statue of Abdullah Al Abebe, a pilot and war hero standing on the actual wreckage of his MiG. The story goes that when he ran out of missiles while defending the oil city of Kirkuk in the north he crashed his MiG into an Iranian bomber to save the installations. Two, almost creepy arches, each representing a pair of severed arms clutching 200-ft curved swords. The arms rest on hundreds of helmets of dead Iraqi soldiers and are supposed to represent the Iraqi prisoners of war killed by the Iranians. Often by pulling out their arms by tying them to two cars pulling in different directions following in the footsteps of the fourth century Persian King Sabur who used horses instead. Today Iraqi officials plead with you not to even mention the story: "No, no, no, please! All that is forgotten now."

BUT can the Iraqis really have such short memories? Foreigners can often underestimate the price the Iraqis paid in the futile war of pique. Each family lost more than one man in the war. Iraq's population is almost exactly the same as that of the Punjab in India. With around 12,000 dead in eight years each Punjabi family seems to personally know someone who has suffered. In Iraq, more than a million have died and it seems incredible that people could still have enthusiasm for a war whose outcome can be nothing but defeat. That too at the command of a leader who has already miscalculated so grotesquely in the past.

If the Iraqis are indeed sullen with their dictator about that, they don't

AIDA JABBORI
TELEX OPERATOR

"Islam has never asked the American people to forcibly occupy our holy shrines. The Americans should be thrown out."



SAFA MOHAMMED
CRIPPLED SOLDIER

"I gave one leg in the eight-year-war against Iran. I will give the other in this war. But watch as I chop *Boosh* into pieces."

the desert between Baghdad and Amman likely to come alive in the event of war, many Indians are planning to escape via Turkey. A group of hotel employees left for Mosul-Nineveh towards the Turkish border on a long drive to Istanbul braving subzero temperatures. But this is just the beginning of round two of an Indian exodus. In case diplomacy fails, the spectre of Indians rotting in ramshackle desert camps shall return with a vengeance.

After their exit from Kuwait, Indians now face a second exodus

Indian hotel workers leaving for Jordan

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HERALD -ICE 91. 5602

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show it. And they can't—what with Big Brother watching them at every street corner. Inside every shop and house, inside cars and ferryboats, everywhere the visage of Saddam Hussain—expatriate Indians prefer *chachaji* to Big Brother—is watching them closely. The building of a Saddam cult is the state's first objective. The mildest criticism attracts harsh penalties. If you need to paint a wall outside your house and a portrait of Saddam happens to be on it, you have to seek the Government's permission before removing it. Often it is possible to see different portraits of Saddam in one official's office—in army uniform, Baath Party uniform, Arab headgear and riding a horse. Elsewhere he could be firing a rifle, taking aim from behind a sandbag, patting a child's cheek or he could be perched proudly in the heart of a map of Iraq along with the portraits of great Iraqi rulers from the ancient Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to the medieval Caliph Haroon Al Rashid.

At the various museums dedicated to him, including the one at the holy Shia city of Karbala, complicated family trees trace his ancestry to none else than Hazrat Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed. He first made his fame in 1959 with the abortive attempt on the life of the then prime minister Abdul Karim Qasim. Qasim's bullet-ridden car is a proud exhibit at the army museum. There are many legends about how Saddam, though wounded in the leg, conducted a lonely long march across the desert into Syria. Strikingly, no other portrait is seen anywhere in Baghdad.

But even Saddam's bitterest critics, western diplomats included, do not say he is crazy. He may indeed be making the greatest miscalculation of his career—but his logic, however skewed, is transparent. This may mean the end of the road for him but it is also his best chance to elevate himself to the leadership of the entire Arab world. His linking Palestine with Kuwait may be dismissed as pirate's logic outside of the region. But in the Arab world there couldn't be a smarter master-stroke.

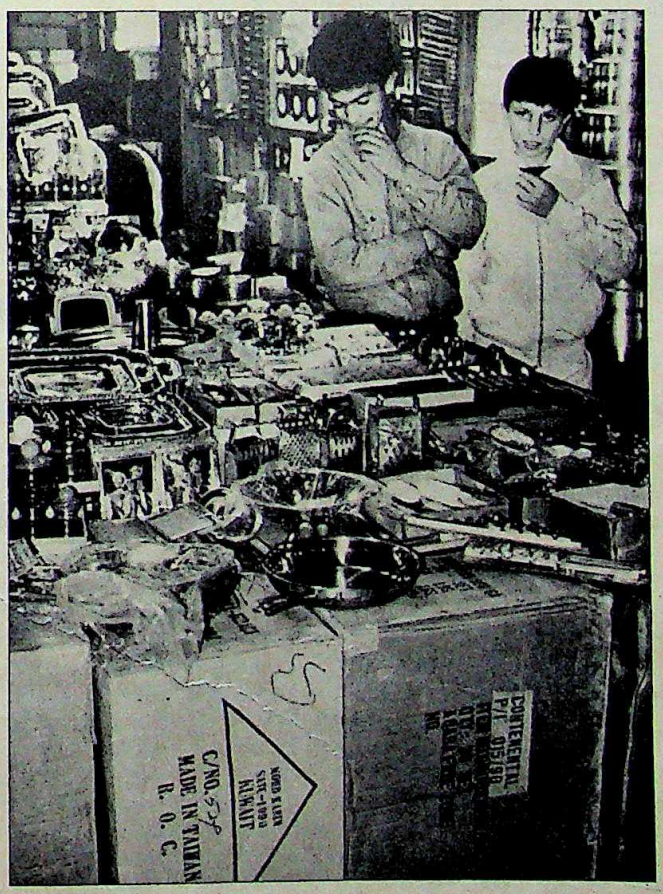
KAMIL M. FADIL
TEA SELLER

"If you have the money there is more than enough, but the prices have gone up 20 times."

The rest of the Islamic world too is reacting with sympathy. In Pakistan there are protests and the US has asked its citizens to leave that country. In many other Islamic countries, including Egypt, pro-Saddam demonstrations have been reported. He displayed some of this support last week at Al Naharwan, a military camp 60 km off Baghdad, where hundreds of Arab militiamen drawn from 13 countries—including Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, who form the Muslim bulwark of the US-led coalition against him—marched to old Pan-Arab slogans: *Yahya Al Baath* (Long live Baath) and *Ya Aruba Hilli, Hilli/Khalli Al Istemar Yuvalli* (Rise Arab nation, rise breaking out of the grip of imperialism). Sure enough they all marched in front of a giant portrait of Saddam.

Saddam and his lieutenants assert that whichever way the map of the region looks after the sand settles, he will come out a winner. Besides, they also project this as a battle between the educated Arabs and the illiterate, debauched sheikhs. Despite all his misdoings, Saddam should get the credit for giving Iraq the most liberal, secular and progressive system in the Islamic world—compared to the obscurantism of the sheikhs. "The sheikhs have a right to hate us because we will finish them. All of them," says Sahhaf. That, apart from the old but tested slogan of Palestine, is what Saddam Hussain is selling fellow Arabs and Muslims.

But in grabbing Kuwait and staying put he may have stretched his luck too far. It was one thing to play games on the middle-eastern chessboard. Knocking off a pawn here, threatening a bishop somewhere else. It is quite another to try and take the chessboard home and hold the world to ransom. Unless he can find a face-saving way to disengage he could be heading for the first—and the last—defeat of his life and the price will unfortunately be paid by the entire world.



Goods looted from Kuwait sold in Al Shoja market

The spoils of victory are not enough

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SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY

Mister Embarrassment

The threatening of the Speaker is in keeping with the foot-in-mouth utterances and quixotic antics that have marked the political career of the law minister

By PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA
with bureau reports

"I bring glory to an office; the post doesn't give me glory."
—Subramanian Swamy, January 1989

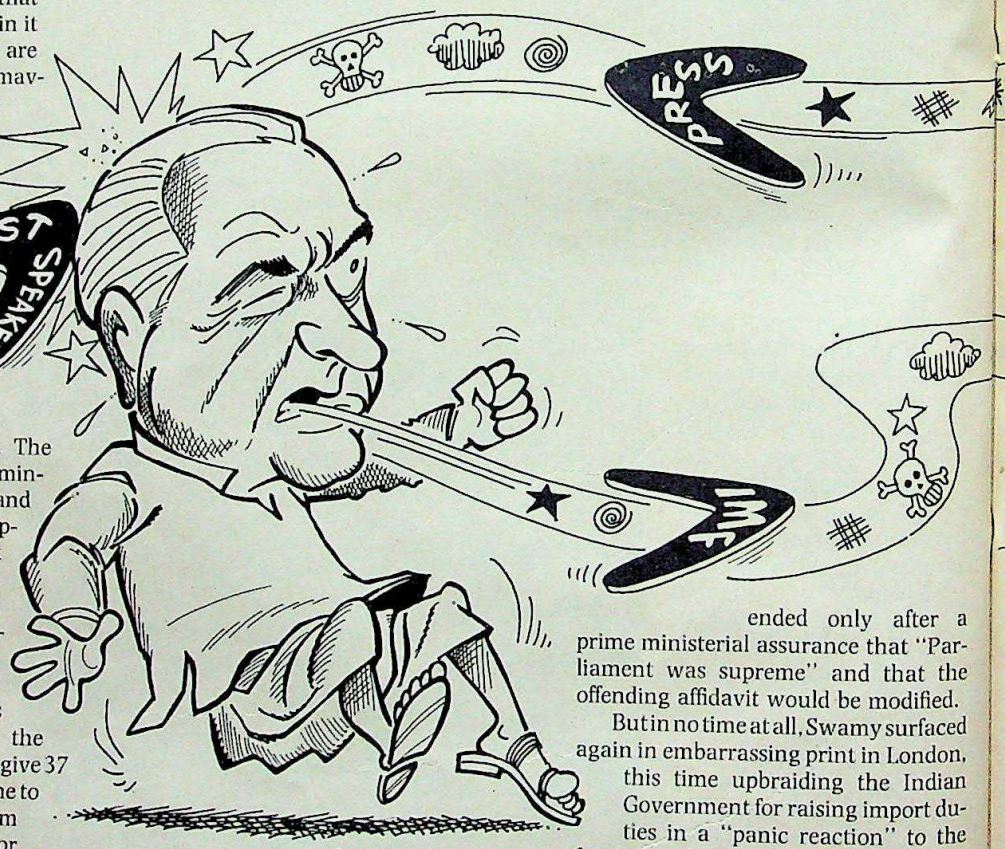
IF you have a large enough mouth, the chances that you will put your foot in it are high. More so if you are Subramanian Swamy—maverick to some, gadfly to others, and plain insufferable to detractors.

Barely two years after he made the statement, the man who had never held a government job before came very close to losing his first one by exposing his office to ridicule. The Harvard-educated Union minister for commerce, law and justice had Parliament in uproar when he told Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray in private that he could put him behind bars. The remarks arrested everyone's attention and provoked a scandal. He was apparently reacting to the Speaker's unwillingness to give 37 Janata Dal(S) MPs more time to explain why some of them should not be disqualified for defying the Janata Dal whip during the trust vote sought by the V.P. Singh government last November.

Pandemonium prevailed and the Lok Sabha was repeatedly adjourned. Swamy was accused of denigrating the very institution of parliamentary democracy. Some even demanded his dismissal from the cabinet and his expulsion from the House. MPs were adamant that he should be made to eat humble pie. The furore eventually died down but only after Swamy had furnished an unconditional apology.

But his irresponsible remarks have antagonised so many that even those among his rapidly-dwindling band of supporters are wondering in private how long he can continue to rub so many people up the wrong way. Even those who are fairly muted in their criticism of Swamy—notably members of the Congress(I) and colleagues in the Janata Dal(S), are keeping quiet out of selfish motives: they feel he can be used as a malleable instrument to browbeat and embarrass their rivals.

The dust had barely settled when Swamy was back in the eye of the storm. The provocation this time was that an officer of the Law Ministry had filed an affidavit in the Delhi High Court to the effect that the Speaker's actions on the disqualification issue could be open to judicial review. As per existing rules, the officer couldn't have filed such an affidavit without the minister's consent. And it seemed obvious to infer that Swamy had given a silent approval to move the court. The upshot: heated debates on January 8 on the relationship between the legislature and the judiciary that ended only after a prime ministerial assurance that "Parliament was supreme" and that the offending affidavit would be modified.



Cartoon by JAYANTO BANERJEE

But in no time at all, Swamy surfaced again in embarrassing print in London, this time upbraiding the Indian Government for raising import duties in a "panic reaction" to the foreign exchange crunch. He said this move ran counter to India's commitments to the General Agreeement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and that it would be rolled back once the IMF gave the country a loan, he authoritatively told the *Financial Times*. In the interview he claimed: "If I can persuade Rajiv Gandhi and Chandra Shekhar to work together—and I would claim the lion's share of the credit for this—I have sufficient self-confidence to make the prime minister accomodate this concept (of liberalisation)."

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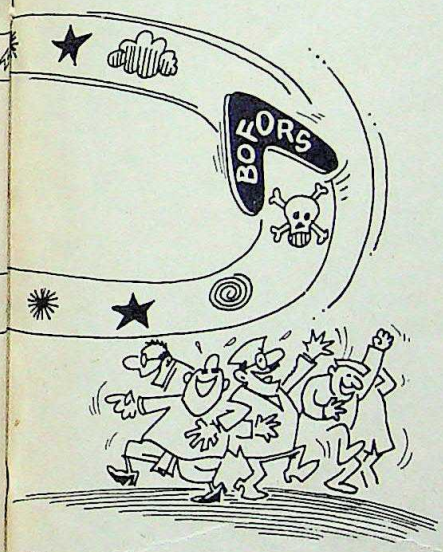
Swamy's off-the-cuff remarks were pilloried in Parliament. Opposition members argued that he was violating all notions of collective responsibility of the government. Under pressure, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar claimed that Swamy had denied what had been attributed to him in the article, but correspondent David Housego who wrote the story stands firmly by it.

If all this looks like a chronic case of shooting his mouth off before he's loaded his brain, Swamy has in the recent past shown signs of wanting to perfect this particular, if peculiar, *modus operandi*. Among other things, he publicly criticised CBI Joint Director K. Madhavan for intervening in Additional Solicitor-General K.T.S. Tulsi's effort to pick holes in the CBI's Bofors FIR—an action widely interpreted as an effort to take the pressure off the investigation.



SWAMY ON SWAMY

I am a pushy fellow. No wine, women, money. While they (other politicians) divide their time between politics and their mistresses, I devote all my time to politics.

◆

I am an angel.

◆

I said I could be and today I am a Cabinet minister—sometimes you can aim for the moon and land on a tree-top.

(On being reminded about his claim that he would become prime minister by 1990)

◆

I think the likes of me are rare.

OTHERS ON SWAMY

The utterances and actions of Swamy indicate that even Harvard University can commit grave errors.

ARUN NEHRU
former commerce minister

He reminds me of a diseased person who likes to draw obscene pictures on lavatory walls.

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE
former Karnataka chief minister

In the present state of appalling gloom which has given birth to such wreckers of national unity as V.P. Singh and L.K. Advani, Swamy in comparison appears to be a man of patriotic commitment despite his provocative idiosyncracies.

K.K. TEWARY
former Congress(I) minister

Swamy's contention is that Madhavan should not have spoken against the Government's counsel in the open court but asked the CBI's counsel to do so. The episode prompted Janata Dal spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy to remark in his characteristically acerbic fashion that "the law minister has himself become a threat to the judiciary".

He returned from the GATT talks at Brussels and claimed that his predecessors in the commerce ministry Arun Nehru and V.P. Singh had "sacrificed" the country's interests in that international forum. When questioned at press conferences, Swamy was at a loss to answer precisely how India's interests had been "surrendered" by past governments. It was obvious that he was merely trying to score political points.

Swamy also reportedly claimed while addressing a group of businessmen in Ahmedabad that the Indian Government would be signing an agreement with the International Monetary Fund on January 23 for a loan of $2.5 billion. This too raised a big hue and cry. Who authorised him to make such an announcement on behalf of the finance minister, that too at a time when Parliament was in session, members asked.

ONE of Swamy's first tasks as commerce minister was to sack S.V.S. Raghavan from the post of chairman of the public sector apex trading organisation Bharat Business International Ltd (BBIL) just as he was on the verge of signing an important Rs 800-crore barter deal with several Japanese trading conglomerates. The negotiations have since fallen through. Also Swamy ordered that BBIL be wound up. His explanation? BBIL was becoming an octopus swallowing other public sector organisations, that it was encroaching on the turf of the Commerce Ministry and that what was needed was decentralisation.

It is not as if Swamy is committing gaffes galore for no rhyme or reason. There seems to be a method in his madness. His opponents are convinced that he is merely dancing to Rajiv's tune—a man he once called namby-pamby. In recent times, Swamy has frequently accused Arun Nehru and V.P. Singh of being intimately involved in the Bofors negotiations and hence, by implication, as culpable as Rajiv may be.

Another of his controversial decisions was the appointment of former cabinet secretary T.N. Seshan, a bureaucrat considered close to the Rajiv regime, as chief election commissioner (CEC), ignoring the then acting CEC V.S. Rama Devi. Swamy's justification? He didn't know she was an "aspirant" for the post. In any case, former cabinet secretaries and other IAS officials have been ap-

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pointed CECs in the past, he points out.

When the Opposition was attacking Swamy in the Lok Sabha on the affidavit issue, his only defenders were Congressmen. Even as Speaker Ray allowed opposition leader L.K. Advani to reopen the discussion on the subject, over half a dozen Congress(I) MPs walked into the well of the House objecting to the ruling.

Swamy himself refused to talk to INDIA TODAY. But the reasons for his importance in the present scheme of things are not too hard to find. He is an useful conduit between Chandra Shekhar and the Congress(I) on the one hand, and the AIADMK's Jayalalitha on the other. He and Rajiv consulted each other during the Lok Sabha debate on the affidavit issue. Further, Swamy has links with moneybags both at home and abroad. In the past he would frequently cavort with influential Rajiv loyalists like NRI businessman Kamal Dhandona and hotelier Lalit Suri. Jaipal Reddy calls him an "operator without shame or scruples."

EVEN if some of Swamy's actions may be perceived as perverse, he undoubtedly has some positive qualities. He is a workaholic, a consummate debater and pursues his adversaries with amazing tenacity. His critics, however, consider him vindictive. The truth may merely be that he chooses his enemies according to the need of the hour.

Swamy has accused Nehru of leaving hundreds of files pending and of not having a single discussion on export strategies. Nehru says these allegations are humbug and that he considers it beneath his dignity to answer them.

Other enmities, however, have proved more durable. Swamy's antipathy towards BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee, for example, who he had accused of being a drunk and a womaniser. When contacted by INDIA TODAY, Vajpayee declined to comment. Swamy's *bete noire*, former Karnataka chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde currently has a defamation suit pending against him for his allegations that Hegde and his son have salted away funds in foreign bank accounts.

Swamy's ability to grab the attention of the media cannot be denied. During the Emergency, Swamy played the role of the Scarlet Pimpernel when he made a dramatic appearance in Parliament and vanished. Then there was his visit to Israel in 1982; a visit to the Golden Temple and a chat with Bhindranwale after which Swamy declared that there were no arms inside; and an announcement that he would be setting up a liaison office for "Tamil Eelam" in India.

In recent years he has been busy garlanding international arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi in the company of Chandra Swami. Swami had also circulated a "censored" version of a note allegedly written on the letterhead of the US detective agency, Fairfax. The note contained the names of Indian politicians who were supposedly under surveillance on the instructions of the Finance Ministry, which was at that time under V.P. Singh. But all those concerned issued vehement denials and the matter died down.

His political somersaults have also become legendary. In the early '70s, he was an RSS supporter and was considered a protege of Nanaji Deshmukh. By the time he entered the Rajya Sabha in 1974, he had become close to Morarji Desai and his son. In 1983, he fought a bitter political battle with his current mentor Chandra Shekhar for the presidentship of the Janata Party and was consequently expelled from the party. He then joined the Lok Dal.

In his hunger to hog newspaper space, Swamy has spared no-one. He has called the Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar "mean, vapid, treacherous and vindictive". He has also alleged that Devi Lal imbibes opium and once suggested that he be kept in a mental asylum. In retaliation, Devi Lal compared Swamy to Ravana.

The arrival of V.P. Singh, however, saw Swamy in limbo with the rump Janata Party, of which he was the only MP. But Singh's subsequent fall and Chandra Shekhar's bare cupboard of talent saw Swamy catapulted straight into the Union Cabinet.

Despite Swamy's undoubted talent for political manipulation, he is proving to be a liability for the Government. Perhaps the absence of a stable political constituency has made him insecure to the point that he periodically bites the hand that feeds him. Some of Chandra Shekhar's critics argue that he is turning a blind eye to Swamy's outrageous conduct because he wants to divert Parliament's attention from more substantive issues.

If that is true, he could not have chosen a better man than the former economics professor.

SHOOTING HIS MOUTH

Subramanian Swamy's volatile and radically changing perceptions of prime ministers, past and present. A sample:

Rajiv Gandhi is the weakest prime minister India ever had. —Mar '88

I'm opposed to Rajiv, the Congress(I) and its politics. —Jan '89

Ideologically, Rajiv and I have very few differences. —Nov '90

◆

V.P. Singh is decent and straight.—Mar '88

V.P. Singh was involved in the Bofors deal in Rajiv's cabinet. —Dec '90

V.P. Singh used the Mandal report to take advantage of the people's suffering. —Dec '90

◆

Chandra Shekhar encourages factionalism because he is indecisive. —Feb '84

Chandra Shekhar contributed a lot to Indian politics. —Apr '88

Chandra Shekhar is not a confirmed socialist and I am not a confirmed capitalist. —Dec '90

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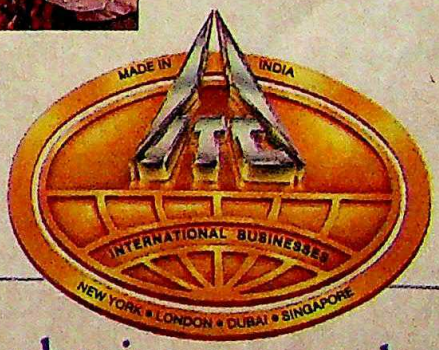

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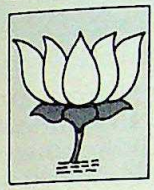
BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Strident Change

New leaders who can carry on the Hindutva crusade have been inducted into the party frontline as it gears up for an ambitious electoral battle.

By BHASKAR ROY



THE saffron mantle has fallen on younger shoulders. At a time when the BJP is impatiently clawing the turf before going in for its electoral kill, the party has chosen to push its second line of leaders onto the front ranks. In the recent organisational elections it has made a deliberate effort to project those leaders who can carry on L.K. Advani's Hindutva crusade with renewed vigour and aggressiveness.

The election of Murli Manohar Joshi, the 56-year-old professor of physics at Allahabad University, as the party president, replacing Advani is an indication of this. Known as an authority on Deen Dayal Upadhyay's theory of 'integral humanism'—the party's guiding philosophy—ideologically Joshi is more fiercely committed than his predecessor to the cause the BJP is now espousing.

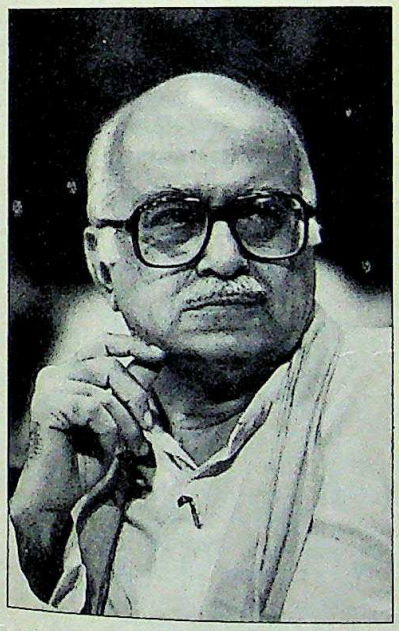
In the states too a bunch of brash new leaders most of whom were initiated into politics on the campus have been anointed, as the party gets set for its most ambitious political battle.

The list of new chiefs of the party in the states where they have emerged as a major power, reads like a roll-call of novices: Om Prakash Kohli, a teacher of Delhi's Deshbandhu College, is the new president of the party's powerful Delhi unit; Ram Vilas Sharma, a young activist, has been elected the party chief in Haryana; N.S. Pharande, a backward caste leader in Maharashtra, Ram Das Agarwal in Rajasthan; Lakhiram Agarwal in Madhya Pradesh and Tarakant Jha in Bihar.

The choice for some of the state chiefs has certainly been guided by the party's current thrust on expanding to newer areas. In Haryana for the first time a non-Punjabi has been made party president, apparently to attract support in rural areas where the party is weak. Again, given the non-Brahmin bias in Maharashtra politics, an OBC chief has been chosen in the state. The BJP which has a total of 562 MLAs in the country has laid a particular emphasis on spreading the organisation in the south. In Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh the party has registered a significant growth. In these three states more district units have been formed through these elections than ever before.

A new generation of leaders who are more outspoken in formulating the party's aim and ambition has come to the centrestage. Asserts Kohli: "I have been in the RSS since my childhood and I am proud of it. For any swayamsewak who wants to work in the political field, the BJP is the natural choice." These former activists of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) are now holding significant party positions. Says party vice-president S.S. Bhandari who was in charge of the organisational elections: "It is natural that in a growing party the new generation should also come up."

And with the new generation comes a new image, even though the shade of saffron will be the same. It is, however, not without reason that the party felt the need for projecting academics and intellectuals. Advani strove to convince his partymen that there was no stigma attached to being



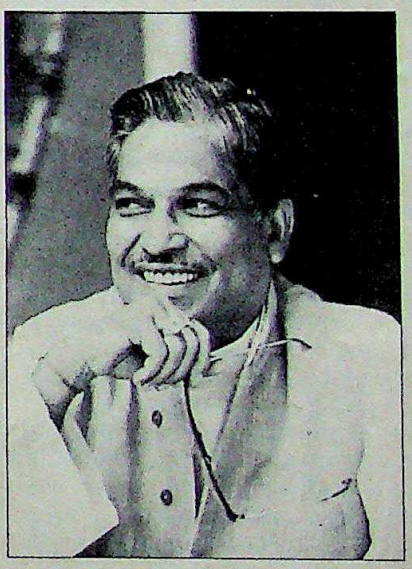
Advani: choosing his own successor

MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI

National President

A professor of physics at Allahabad University and an authority on Deen Dayal's theory of 'integral humanism', he is committed to the Hindutva cause.

"The Hindu resurgence now being seen across the country is an assertion of India's identity as a nation."



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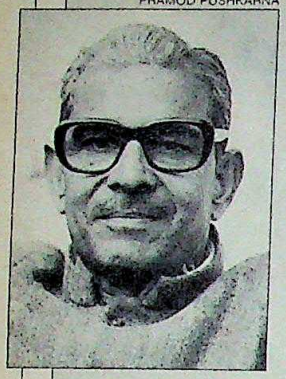
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



OM PRAKASH KOHLI

President, Delhi unit

Handpicked by Advani to loosen the hold of the trading community.

"The party has elected a team which can carry forward the ideological battle."

LAKHIRAM AGARWAL

President, Madhya Pradesh

His re-election marks the strengthening of the trading community's hold.

"My election demonstrates working of internal democracy within the party."

R.C. SAHU

staunchly pro-Hindu and propagated his doctrine of "minorityism". The party's new ideological struggle on the Hindutva issue is perceived to be a long-drawn-out one. And the new phalanx is expected to dig in while the Hindutva banner is bandied about and perhaps more blood spilled. Says Kohli: "The party has elected the team competent to carry forward the ideological battle and reinforce its distinct identity."

Joshi, despite his comparatively fewer years in the party organisation has been chosen because of his command over subtle theoretical issues. Joshi, who had the backing of the RSS bosses, is even more forthright about the political goal of the BJP philosophy. While Advani gave currency to what he called "pseudo-secularism", Joshi has gone further in emphasising the futility of the Nehruvian model of democracy. Says he: "The institutions of the Nehruvian model were a carbon copy of the western democracies and not suited to the genius of this country." For him the current Hindu resurgence is "an assertion of India's identity as a nation". Witty and articulate, Joshi is going to join the current debate on secularism with a new zeal.

In fact, before the election process started, senior party leaders discussed among themselves the need for bringing in comparatively new faces. Advani himself was strongly in favour of projecting the younger leaders. Even though the elections gave it a new line of leadership, the image of unity that the party projected took a severe battering.

If the election of the national president was a smooth sailing, in the states it exposed a debilitating factionalism in the party as leaders have started having visions of power. And in most states the central leadership had to intervene.

For instance, the troika which controls the Delhi BJP—Madan Lal Khurana, Kedar Nath Sahani and Vijay Kumar Malhotra—endorsed the candidature of Ram Bhaj, vice-president of the local party unit for president. Another group supported Mewa Ram Arya, a prominent leader. To find a way out Advani intervened and backed Kohli as a compromise candidate. He won without contesting.

IN Rajasthan the old rivalry between Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi came to the fore once again. While the Chaturvedi group supported Satish Agarwal, a senior party leader known for administrative and organisational abilities, Shekhawat backed Ram Das Agarwal, a wealthy businessman with mining interests based in Orissa, who finally won. Complains an aggrieved party worker: "Agarwal hardly belongs to Rajasthan; for the first time we have a non-resident party chief."

What has worried the central leadership is the ugly shape party infighting has taken in its bastion—Madhya Pradesh. Indiscipline, squabbles and open defiance of the leadership were rampant during the party elections. For the first time in the state, the nominee of the

BIHAR

Bitter Feud

IF the organisational elections reflected the BJP's supreme confidence, the split in the Bihar unit was a splash of dirt on its saffron facade. While the party leaders were celebrating the unanimous election of the new state unit chief Tarakant Jha, Inder Singh Namdhari, leader of the group of 10 BJP legislators who formed the Sampurna Kranti Dal (SKD), was addressing a 10,000-strong crowd nearby.

Even the election of Jha as president came after some tough manoeuvring by the central leadership. Ramdas Rai, a former MLA had staked his claim for the post and had demanded an election if he is not chosen unanimously. After Jha's election the party headquarters was rampaged by rebels.

The state unit tried to put up a brave front in the face of the split. "The formation of the SKD exposes the real face of Namdhari and his supporters and in fact we are feeling as much relief as one feels after getting rid of scabies," party leader Yashodhanand Sinha said.

It soon became obvious that the BJP would have to change tack to face the challenge of SKD. The party has kept its door open for potential defectors and might not even make the Babri Masjid or the Mandal Commission report a poll plank in the state to face the SKD-Janata Dal onslaught.

As far back as 1967, 13 of the 26 seats the Jan Sangh had won was from Chhotanagpur belt in south Bihar, which returned 21 of the 39 BJP MLAs in the last election. But only five of the 21 have joined Namdhari.

Namdhari and the other rebel leader Samresh Singh even championed the cause of a separate 'Vanachal state' comprising 13 districts of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas in south Bihar. And sensing the mood of the people in the tribal belt the whole party in the state had got involved in the issue.

Jha has the uneviable task of not only keeping the party intact but of preventing Namdhari from taking away south Bihar from the party's grasp.

—FARZAND AHMED

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LALIT JELOKA

TARAKANT JHA

President, Bihar unit

Will have to prevent the Namdhari group from capturing South Bihar.

"The fact that Namdhari has a link with the Janata Dal is an open secret now."

RAM DAS AGARWAL

President, Rajasthan unit

He has to help Shekhawat tackle dissident activity in the party.

"Our aim is to capture power in Delhi. We are determined to succeed."

ROHIT JAIN

leadership could not get elected unopposed. Rather Lakhiram Agarwal, Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa's candidate, had to face a stiff contest from former chief minister V.K. Saklecha.

Saklecha, who had earlier been denied a ticket in the assembly elections, this time wanted to settle scores with the ruling group in the state. He polled 36 per cent of the votes. Saklecha, who returned to the party-fold before the last general election, after six years in the wilderness, is not a popular leader. The fact that he pulled in so many votes despite his unpopularity and long political sabbatical, is a measure of the disaffection within the state BJP. Says Saklecha: "I contested the election to express the growing dissatisfaction among the party workers with the leadership and its style of functioning."

THE state BJP leadership, however, sought to project the organisational polls as a demonstration of inner-party democracy. Says Agarwal: "Contest means democracy and certainly not factionalism." But the fact remains that the party's central leadership tried very hard to avert the contest.

Laments a party veteran: "What we see today is the advent of the Congress culture."

It most definitely is. The party election in Madhya Pradesh was indication enough of the shattering of the we-are-a-united-cadre facade. The seemingly strong pedestal on which stood the BJP strongmen—Kusha Bhau Thakre, Sunderlal Patwa, Kailash Sarang and Sardar Angre—was rocked. Almost all of their nominees lost. And the presidents of as many as 35 out of 45 district units were changed. In Gwalior, rivalry between Water Resources Minister Shitala Sahay and the MLA from Lashkar, Bhau Saheb Potnis, was the talking point. In Bhopal the venue of the election was turned into a veritable fortress with heavy police deployment in apprehension of violent clashes between the feuding factions.

Despite the eruption of factionalism in several states, it is a measure of the BJP's organisational strength and self-confidence that it has been able to hold the elections at all. Says Bhandari: "Going by what is happening in other parties our party polls are a big achievement. When posts are limited and claimants are many, some rivalry is expected and natural."

The mood in the party now is certainly upbeat. That a leader of Advani's stature has stepped down making room for a junior colleague has impressed the party ranks all the more because it reflects the level of confidence almost bordering on arrogance.

But the new leaders are aware that the party's distinctive new phase—of being isolated by other parties and being the common enemy of all—is no easy path to trudge though. Perhaps the thought that there are war-weary veterans like Advani and Vajpayee alongside and that the Hindutva fervour is at its height might be some sort of consolation.

THINK-TANK

New Blood

ALONG with the leadership a new think-tank has emerged in the BJP. The party strategy and policy are no longer the exclusive domain of the wise old heads. During the past few years a couple of youth leaders too have made their way into the chamber of deliberation. While L.K. Advani continues to be the guiding force behind this team, the new president, Murli Manohar Joshi, will lead it. Two prominent media personalities who are also regarded as party theoreticians K.R. Malkani, the former editor of the party journal *Organiser*, and columnist Jay Dubashi will have a prominent role to play. Govindacharya, a former ABVP activist and RSS pracharak, is a key figure in the deliberation process. And the latest entrant into this circle is once again a former ABVP leader, Arun Jaitley, the former additional solicitor-general.

The think-tank often meets informally and deliberates to formulate the party's stand on different issues. Sometimes they even decide which party leader should brief the press on a particular issue. On some crucial developments, it is the think-tank which prepares the party statements no matter in whose name it is issued. Apart from Joshi and Advani, the rest of the party brain maintains a studied low profile.

They primarily offer the party president suggestions and views on a variety of subjects. More often than not, their views are incorporated in the party line, sometimes through modification. Govindacharya, who was brought to the party headquarters at Advani's request, wields considerable clout within the party. He is well known for his behind-the-scenes manipulation.

Apart from decision-making, Jaitley's views are also sought on legal matters. In the recent election symbol case, it was he who represented the BJP before the Election Commission. Several new faces are expected to be added to this team after the new leadership formally takes over the reins.

—BHASKAR ROY

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HARYANA

Muzzling the Press

India Today's printers subjected to terror tactics

THE threatening spectre of pressures on the press came centrestage again last fortnight, as Parliament erupted in a furore over the brutal attempts at muzzling Living Media India Ltd, the publishers of INDIA TODAY and *Newstrack*. Lok Sabha members across party lines condemned the cutting off of electricity to Thomson Press, printers of INDIA TODAY, and the reign of terror unleashed by motivated elements.

Said Janata Dal's I.K. Gujral in the House: "The man behind Meham is trying to muzzle the press." L.K. Advani, BJP, said throttling the press amounted to the murder of democracy, while Congress(I)'s P.V. Narasimha Rao urged the prime minister to take immediate action as the violence was not a case of union rivalry but state repression.

The Faridabad-based Thomson Press, INDIA TODAY's associate company, has been the target of attacks since May last year, after the reportage by INDIA TODAY and *Newstrack* of the rigging during the Meham by-election. In particular *Newstrack's* exclusive footage of the violence was viewed by the V.P. Singh cabinet pressuring Om Prakash Chautala to resign as chief minister. Says R.D. Yadav, the president of the Thomson Press employees' union, Hind Mazdoor Sangathan (HMS), which has majority support of the 1,800 workers: "Chautala wants the press to shut down and he is using the Lok Mazdoor Sangh (LMS)."

The trouble first started under the guise of inter-union rivalry. The LMS, a Haryana-based union floated by Chautala, started attacking HMS workers. Says Yadav: "The LMS wants to reign on the strength of the lathi or why should they reject our demand for elections? Their activities are not like that of a union but of a criminal force and the administration is backing them to promote goondaism." LMS leader Rajinder Sharma counters: "The police is not supporting us. If HMS is in a majority, why do they feel threatened?"

Little proof, however, is needed of the administration's partisan role. While the police is quick to register cases and arrest HMS members, no investigations have been carried out on the FIRs lodged by the HMS against the LMS. Says Niranjan Singh, a helper in the printing section, who is lying in bed with a fractured leg and 30 stitches on his head: "LMS people, who are not even employees, beat me up. I have identified all the assailants by name, but no action has been taken. The police tell us they can't do anything because of Chautala."

SHARAD SAXENA

Protesting workers with injured colleagues

Niranjan Singh is not the only one. It is common knowledge in Faridabad's industrial belt that the LMS—*loot maar sangh* as it is popularly called—can indulge in violent activities without fear of the law. Janata Dal MP, Samarendra Kundu, said in Parliament that "hired goondas" were operating in the area.

The HMS members allege that history sheeters are roaming around intimidating the press workers. Asks Yadav: "How is it that not a single LMS worker is behind bars?" Defends district police chief Resham Singh: "We aren't taking sides. We have to register cases according to the extent of injury. The HMS workers have mostly been assaulted with blunt weapons. What can we do?"

Along with the violence—as many as 15 workers have been assaulted in the last one month—intimidation came in the form of disconnection of the electricity supply to Thomson Press on January 3. Said Vinod Kumar, the works director: "It is a clear case of harassment as we've been given no cause for the disconnection." Sushil Kumar, the deputy commissioner, offers an explanation: "Faridabad faces a power shortage. There is a cable defect and it is being looked into." But strangely the press was not informed of the cable defect. Said Congress(I)'s Bhajan Lal: "The electricity has been deliberately cut."

In any case with the two unions fighting it out, and the police playing partisan, a fear pyschosis had seized the press and absenteeism had grown, attendance falling to 40 per cent. But it was the disconnection of the electricity supply that brought the issue to the notice of Parliament. Following the uproar, the prime minister assured angry members that the disconnection was due to a technical fault and the supply would be restored the same evening.

This was done, but the violence continued unabated, with one more press worker being beaten up next morning. The workers then struck work and went in a protest delegation to Haryana Bhawan, shouting slogans against Chautala and Devi Lal. Then on January 10, CPI(M)-affiliated CITU, and the HMS called for a *chakka jam* in Faridabad. The Delhi-Agra highway was blocked and activity in the town brought to a standstill. The protestors were addressed by Ajit Singh, George Fernandes and Subhasini Ali.

Finally, journalists boycotted Parliamentary proceedings for one day, and the Editors' Guild voiced its protest. Even Minister of State for Home Subodh Kant Sahay, admitted it was "completely shameful". But the powers that run Haryana seemed quite impervious to the uproar, even as the tension in Faridabad continued to heighten.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

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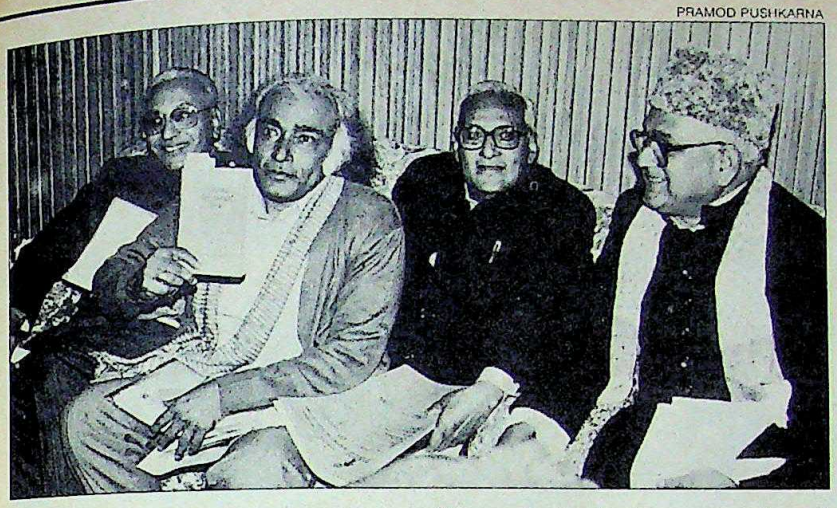
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The negotiating leaders in a jovial mood

VHP-BMAC

Talking Terms

The Government buys time

FROM the dusty and blood-splattered battlefield of rallies, marches and kar sewas, the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy has now shifted to the intellectual plane. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) last week exchanged an impressive bulk of documents to corroborate their respective positions.

Yet another positive step was the formation on January 10 of four experts' committees to go into the historical, archaeological, legal and revenue records aspects, and examine in depth the evidence submitted by the VHP and the BMAC. The experts will submit their report by February 5.

Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar can certainly claim credit for bringing the opposing parties from the battlefield to the negotiating table for the first time. For once, saner elements in both the camps prevailed over the hawks. Says VHP leader Surya Krishna: "So far the charge against us was that we were not interested in a dialogue because there was no basis for our demand. This time we have decided to present our case before the people."

The BMAC leaders too are optimistic about the negotiation process. They hope that once their "comprehensive package of documents draws the people's attention it will no longer be possible for the VHP to distort history".

The VHP leaders feel that the BMAC documents are replete with comments and lack archaeological evidence.

Javed Habib, member of the BMAC, on the other hand, claims as clinching evidence the photocopy of the FIR filed by police constable Mata Prasad on December 23, 1949, the day after idols were placed inside the mosque.

But given the uncompromising mood in both the camps, there seems not much hope for an early resolution of the issue. The VHP's position that the temple must be built on the very site of the mosque appears irrevocable. Says VHP supremo Ashok Singhal: "We do not like the term demolition. What we are interested in is renovation of the original temple." On the other hand, Habib insists: "We are ready for a settlement, not for surrender."

Along with the hardening of attitudes there are also misgivings about the Government's sincerity. When the VHP and BMAC delegations went to submit their rejoinder at the residence of Union Minister of State for Home Subodh Kant Sahay, he was away at Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's farmhouse in Bhondsi much to the despair of the delegations. It revealed the casual approach of the Government which often seemed interested only in buying time. Says a bitter Surya Krishna: "I do not know how serious the Government is."

Though neither party is ready to take the blame for pulling out of the dialogue, they are, at the same time, preparing their future strategies. The VHP team will report the outcome of the talks to the three-day conference of chiefs of the Hindu sects—Marg Darshak Mandal—at Allahabad from January 15. This conference is supposed to give a new guideline of action for the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

Despite the bleak prospects, the first-ever dialogue on the dispute has already served an important purpose by bridging the psychological gulf between the feuding forces. —BHASKAR ROY

KARNATAKA

Exit Furore

THE chief minister and chief secretary of a state are meant to work harmoniously, complementing each other's functions. In Karnataka, the occupants of these posts have been sparring since October. In the final round, the loser was the chief secretary, M. Sankaranarayanan, who was relieved from his job. But Chief Minister S. Bangarappa could find that his victory is pyrrhic, for his opponent went down accusing him of being soft on corruption.

In the previous government of Veerendra Patil, Sankaranarayanan, 56, played a key role in the drive against corrupt IAS and IPS officers. The trouble broke out when Bangarappa became chief minister and rehabilitated some of them. Said Sankaranarayanan: "I am being victimised for resisting the whitewashing of corrupt officers."

Bangarappa (left); and Sankaranarayanan

Sankaranarayanan publicly attacked Bangarappa as untrustworthy and unreliable. Bangarappa retaliated by issuing a show-cause notice to explain why action should not be taken against him for his "outbursts". Sankaranarayanan then filed a petition before the Central Administrative Tribunal asking for a stay of his transfer order, which was admitted.

For those who want to tackle corruption in Karnataka, it's the setback to the cause, not the damage to one man's career, that is depressing.

—C.B. YESHVANTH KUMAR

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UTTAR PRADESH

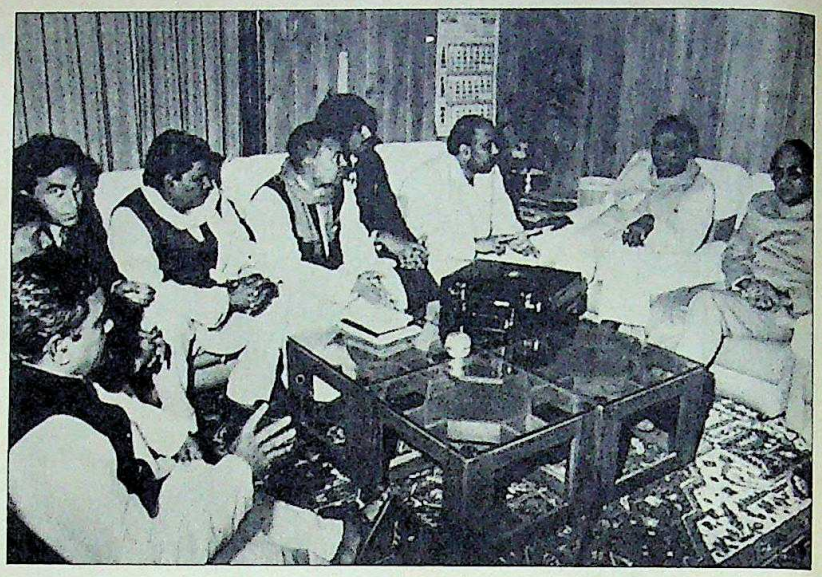
On the Brink

Congress(I) prepares to strike

A rare parliamentary term 'cut motion' (opposition members bring it to reduce grant demands) will soon enter the common man's lexicon. This is the motion that the Congress(I) in Uttar Pradesh has ingeniously decided to bring on the budget in the Assembly session starting January 21. One objective was attained when Speaker H.K. Srivastava granted the opposition party status to the Congress(I) on January 9. The other was to embarrass Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. The motion could cut deeper. If the 94-member Congress(I) votes for the motion alongside the Janata Dal (88 MLAs) and the BJP (55 MLAs), Yadav's 121-member Janata Dal (S) Government will have to bow out.

The surprising Congress(I) move indicates that the party has decided to reverse its decision of November last when it saved the Yadav Government. While the Congress(I) Legislative Party Leader N.D. Tiwari confirmed that they would bring in the cut motion, a senior party MLA elaborated: "It would become impossible for us to vote against the motion because of discontent within the party against our decision to support and because we have failed to convince the people at large about our step."

To find out about the motion and how the Congress(I) will behave when a vote of thanks to the governor is tabled, Yadav met Tiwari on January 6, but did not get any categorical assurance. Tiwari later told INDIA TODAY diplomatically: "As our support to Yadav in November was part of the party's commitment at the Centre, even now the decision can only be taken in Delhi."



Speaker Srivastava (second from right) with Janata Dal leaders

But the vehemence with which the party argued to hold on to Tiwari's position as leader of the opposition is proof that its stance vis-a-vis Yadav has only but hardened. The question was hanging fire ever since the Janata Dal group leader Reoti Raman Singh staked his claim for the post. To argue its case, the Congress(I) sent a delegation led by Chief Whip Pramod Tiwari to the

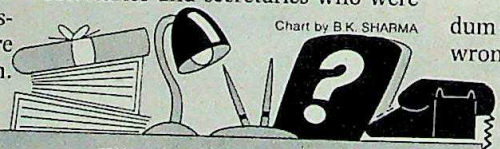
IAS

On The Move

THE bureaucrats and Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav are locking horns in Uttar Pradesh. After the biggest ever reshuffle last year of the bureaucrats in the state, the IAS Association had submitted a memorandum to the chief secretary complaining against the political nature of most of the transfers, and how frequent moving from place to place adversely affects the administration and causes harassment to the officials concerned. Yadav has remained unrepentant and even on New Year's day gave marching orders to another 22 officers.

In its detailed analysis the association found that 81 per cent of the top officials were moved in 1990. (The previous record was less than 50 per cent during 1987). This meant that out of the 409 IAS officers in the state, 334 were moved—53 of them twice. Even officers at senior levels were affected. Of the 40 principal secretaries and secretaries who were heading various government departments, 38 received marching orders and 10 of the 13 divisional commissioners were also changed.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



TRANSFER MELA

ADMINISTRATIVE TRANSFERS

	TOTAL IAS IN U.P. CADRE	OFFICERS AVAILABLE FOR SERVICE IN U.P.	TOTAL OFFICIALS TRANSFERRED
1987	515	349	174
1988	524	377	91
1989	538	396	129
1990	538	409	334

AVERAGE TENURE IN MONTHS

OFFICIALS	on 1.1.88	1.1.89	1.1.90	31.12.90
District Magistrates	11.96	9.73	10.04	9.41
Commissioners	19.08	20.92	19.38	10.00
Secretaries	11.07	22.25	14.92	9.93

The IAS association's memorandum states: "The transfers are sending wrong signals to the members of the service who are being told that all that matters is a proper political connection and not their performance." True, because, most of the officers that have not been moved are highly controversial, including four secretaries against whom vigilance and other inquiries are still pending.

The representation also rues the fact that mid-year transfers not only put the officers' lives in a disarray reflecting on their work, but also the lower level staff "do not take officers seriously because of their instability".

The administration's slackness in controlling the communal riots in the state last year can be attributed to the fact that 54 of the

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Speaker. Pramod told the Speaker: "You have to wait to see how the Congress(I) supports the cut motion." But the Janata Dal members wanted the Speaker to get a written assurance from the Congress(I) that it would vote in favour of the motion. The Speaker in his ruling said that he was convinced that the Congress(I) would carry out all the responsibilities of an opposition party.

Meanwhile, Yadav continued his efforts to mollify the Congress(I). To fulfil the party's conditions, he announced a commission to go into the issue of reservation on economic criteria and sought judicial opinion to appoint a high court judge to inquire into the Ayodhya killings and the communal riots in the state, a matter he has kept in abeyance for two months.

But Yadav's position is now threatened even within his own party. Fourteen Janata Dal(S) legislators issued a signed statement in Delhi on December 28 asking Yadav to step down. Later in Lucknow the dissident group claimed the support of 30 odd MLAs. Yadav tried to quell the brewing revolt by appointing three suspected rebels—Ram Ashrey Agnihotri, Anwar Mohammed and Prabhu Dayal—as chairmen of three important public undertakings.

But a Brutus may not be needed, for the cut motion can seal Yadav's fate when the session opens.

—DILIP AWASTHI

63 district magistrates were transferred and those posted in places like Aligarh, Agra, Gonda and Fatehpur survived for just eight months. Asked one district magistrate: "In a few months do you expect me to develop contacts to a level which would help me in controlling a communal riot?"

But what could be the motives behind the transfer mela? Said a senior secretary: "It sounds as if we (IAS officials) are the main target of the political rulers. Somebody up there is either deriving sadistic pleasure out of it or else has a grudge against the bureaucrats in general." Speculated a former Congress minister: "Maybe he (Yadav) is simply making things difficult for others who, he knows, might succeed him."

But on its part all that the IAS association has asked for is a sound policy under which transfers should not be made for political objectives. But a chief minister struggling for his very survival obviously has other things on his mind.

—DILIP AWASTHI

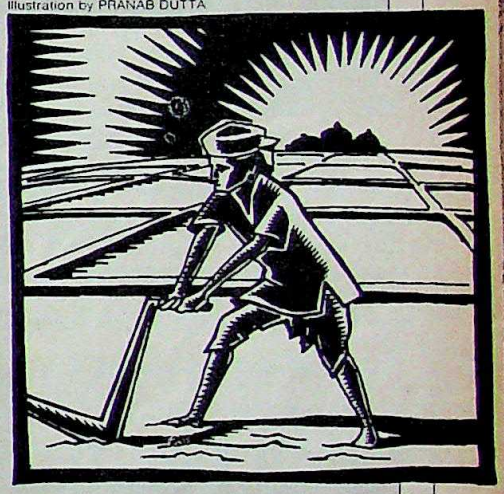
Rustic Irreverence

INSIDE EYE BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

THE village of Basoma, a slush-laned settlement with its congeries of mud and brick huts dustily silhouetted in the evening haze a half-kilometre towards the setting sun from the meter gauge railroad track that winds its way from Agra to Kathgodam in the heart of Uttar Pradesh's Badaun district, is a long, long way from Ayodhya. It is peopled by Thakurs, Dheemars, Muraos, Ahirs, and some Muslims. During this time of the year their ageless life-cycle summons them into their fields to water newly-planted wheat, potatoes, mustard, and to pick heads of cauliflower and radish, snow-white turnips, blood-red carrots and sea-green chillies to take to the nearby *mandis* for the Tuesday *bara bazaar*.

But Basoma, in this year of Hindu religious awakening was supposed to be destined for greater things. So was Abdullahganj, several kilometres east, as were Khiria, Bhura, Bhadrol, unknown villages 15 kilometres north whose only claim to fame, in the eons they have existed, is trying to tame the fiercely unrelenting sands on the banks of the Ganges into cultivable land. Villages like these, according to BJP leader L.K. Advani when he undertook his Rath Yatra, were to become the vanguard of the greatest mass movement witnessed during India's recent history.

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



The BJP in it's scheme for the mass mobilisation of Hindu sentiment is attempting to reach out to and radicalise the nation's peasantry by parading the remains of the kar sewaks slain in Ayodhya through remote villages. In the opening days of the new year BJP legislators and workers descend on these villages in jeeps, motorbikes, carrying urns of the martyrs' mortal remains. Loud-speakers blare Hinduism-in-danger. Village *chaupals*, local mandirs form the venues for the well-attended meetings. BJP activists distribute scarves, badges, even wristwatches emblazoned with pro-Mandir slogans.

The crowds listen, politely attentive, seated, or leaning on their lathis, some balancing on their right legs, scratching their calves with the back of the foot of the left legs. *"Bolo Siya Ram Chandra ki..."* the speaker intones, and the crowds respond, *"Jai!"* They've chanted this all their lives. It's routine. The BJP workers claim success. As they begin winding up, they probably do not hear the voices from the gathering that draw approving nods that ripple through the crowd. "But what about diesel prices. We can't get fuel for our pumps." "There's no relief on our loans."

The new rural recruits to the greatest mass movement in recent history begin dispersing. Now they're talking to one another. Maheshwar Singh of Bhakora: "It's funny. Hindus like to guard the remains of their dead with a jealous passion. How come the families of these martyrs are allowing the remains of their dead ones to be taken all over the countryside by politicians?"

Sher Singh, *pradhan* of Fatehpur village, with scathing irreverence: "How do we know what's in those urns? Whose bones are they?" Har Dayal, a scheduled caste Jatav: "We can't even enter the temple in the village, so what does the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya mean to us?"

"Ram," says, Ram Phal of Runnuiyya, "is supposed to dwell in our hearts, not in a temple. We don't need to learn about our *dharma* from politicians seeking votes. Why don't they bring down prices?"

What about the large turn-out? I ask Maheshwar. "Villagers always throng to a *nautanki* travelling troupe," he answers with a wink as he carts blood-red carrots, snow-white turnips, sea-green chillies to the market.

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TAMIL NADU

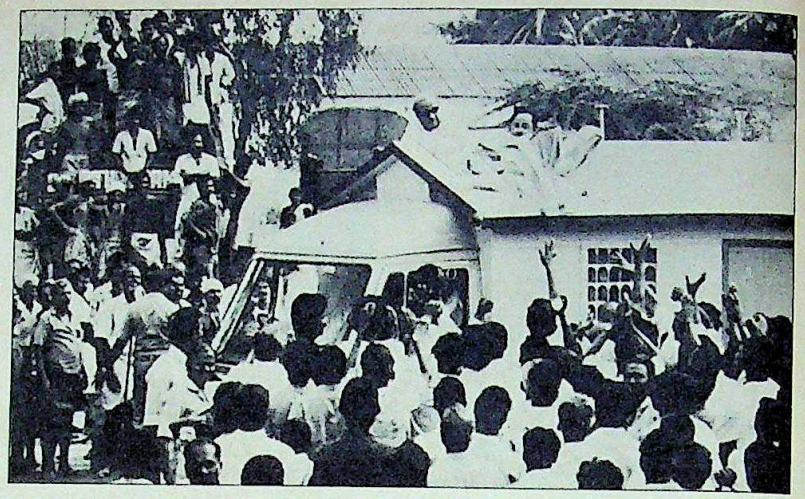
In a Corner

Karunanidhi hits the streets

MUTHUVEL Karunanidhi prefers to take the bull by the horns. It was therefore expected of him to come up with some bold and original political gimmick as the AIADMK-Congress(I) combine mounted pressure on the prime minister—the 11 AIADMK MPs can bring down the Central Government—for dismissing the two-year-old DMK Government for harbouring LTTE militants.

So, last fortnight even as there was much furore in Parliament and Chandra Shekhar assured the House that the Government would think "a hundred times" before dismissing the DMK Government, the Tamil Nadu chief minister launched a rath yatra. The purpose: to inaugurate a low-cost housing scheme for the backward Adi Dravidar community across the state. In the first phase of the yatra Karunanidhi held 16 meetings and declared open 2,512 houses for Adi Dravidars apart from 111 panchayat buildings and 41 school buildings.

At each halt the chief minister blew his government's trumpet and went on to give a call to the people to stay with him in his "struggle for democracy". At a meeting in Chengal Anna, he said:"We are not going to hang ourselves if we lose power."



Karunanidhi on a rath yatra

At the general council of the party last fortnight he asked his partymen to start out on a propaganda campaign between January 20 and 31. And once the rath yatra was on its way drawing huge crowds it was obvious that the state was slipping into election mode.

The TNCC(I) President Vazhapaddi K.Ramamoorthy charged that the real LTTE men were tipped off about the raids. Militants in jail are getting such top class treatment, including TV sets, that even the police seems to be getting frustrated. Admits Vellore DIG, T.S. Panchapakesan, under whose jurisdiction 500 militants are kept: "The Government can be a lot tougher."

Even as the Adi Dravidars gleefully move into concrete-roofed houses, the chief minister might find himself out in the cold considering political equations. —ANAND VISWANATHAN

MADHYA PRADESH

Poll Politics

CHIEF Minister Sunderlal Patwa seems to have a penchant for controversial political decisions. Even as the Bharat Bhavan furore was dying down, he called for the panchayat elections on January 23. Says Patwa: "It will be a referendum on my government."

Congress(I) leader S.C. Shukla termed the timing of the poll a 'murder of democracy', and his party boycotted the winter assembly session. The last day for the filing of nominations, December 26, was announced just 12 days in advance. That left the opposition parties stunned, especially the Janata Dal(S), which was recognised by the Election Commission only on December 26.

The BJP Government had amended the Panchayati Raj Act last year providing for direct elections to the posts of sarpanchs, and the janpad block presidents and district chiefs. Another innovation in the rural councils' elections is that posts for women have been reserved at all levels, and the quotas marked out for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The reservation for women at the panchayat level is 20 per cent, and at the district level, 10 per cent.

Campaign for panchayat poll

R.C. SAHU

The elections will be held in a haphazard manner and there is much scope for rigging. There are no ballot papers and instead, the names of the contestants are being written out, and the stickers of their poll symbols pasted against their names. As sufficient government employees are not available for election duty, 1.5 lakh private individuals are being engaged to man the polling booths and canisters will be used, not ballot boxes.

Though the BJP is optimistic of sweeping the polls, economic issues like the price rise may well dictate the outcome. —N.K. SINGH

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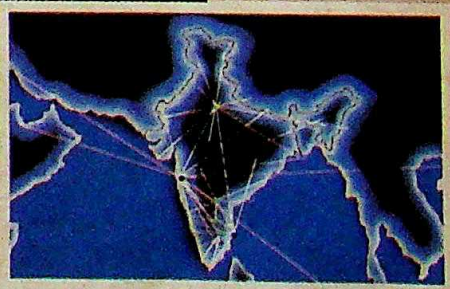

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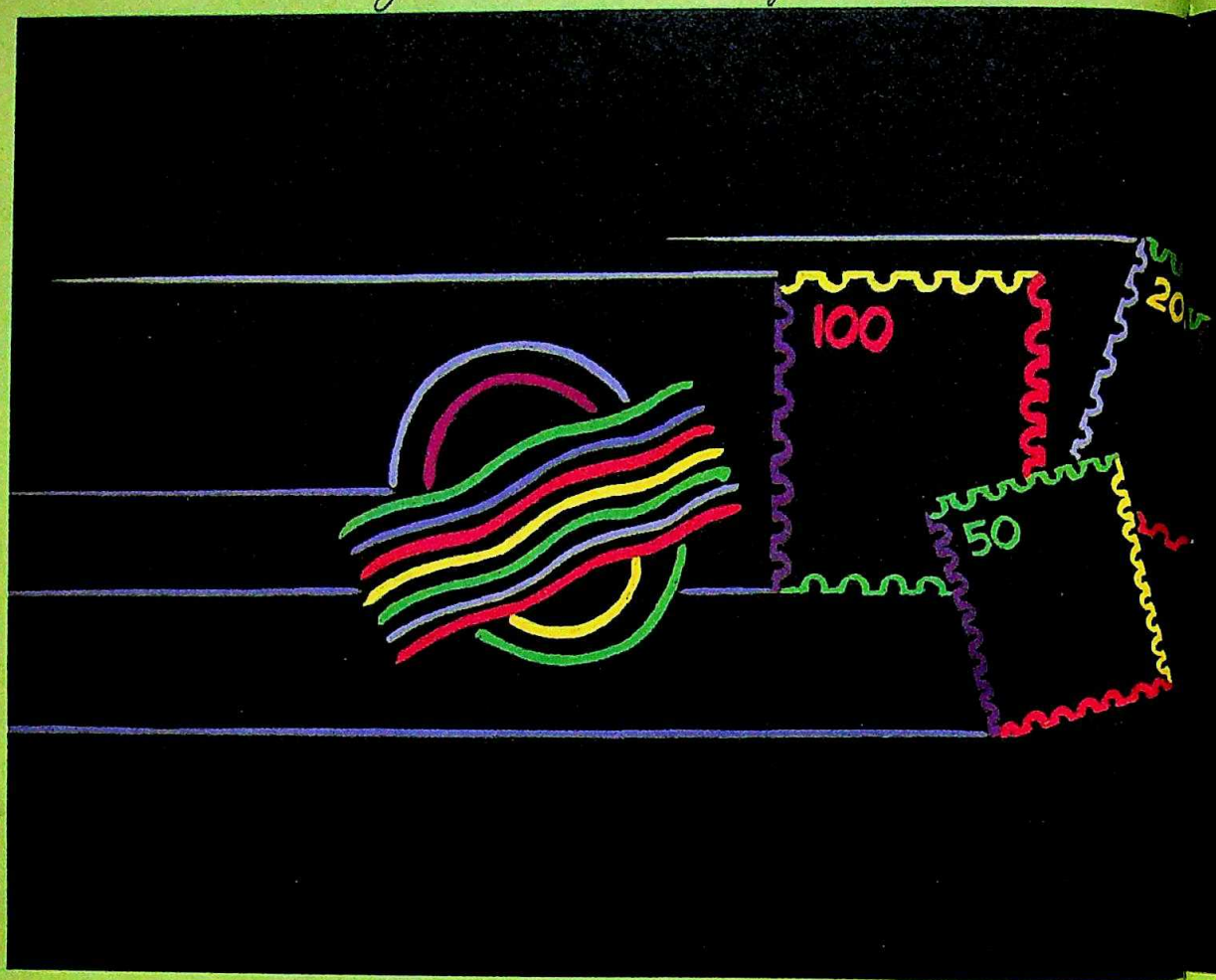

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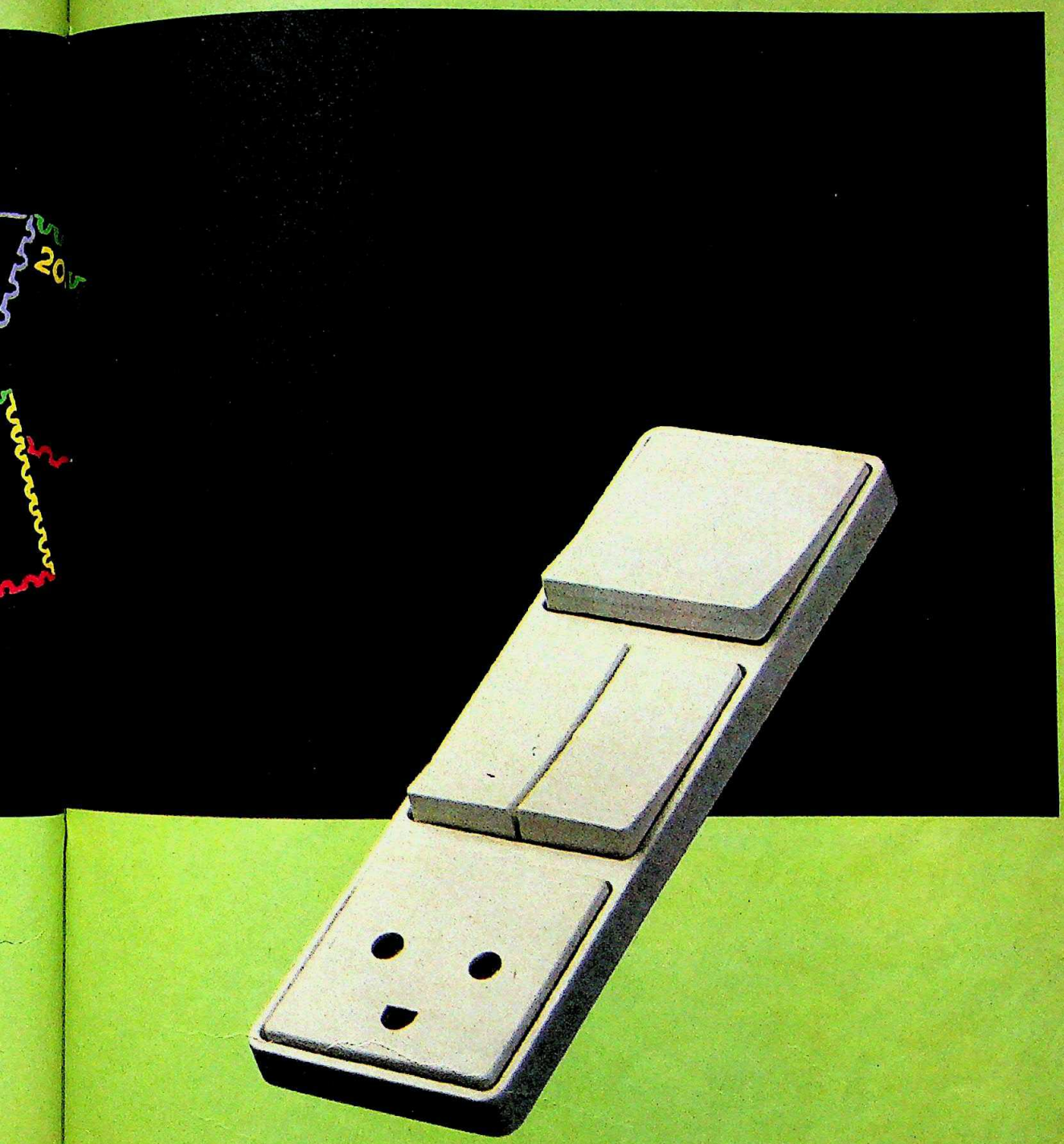

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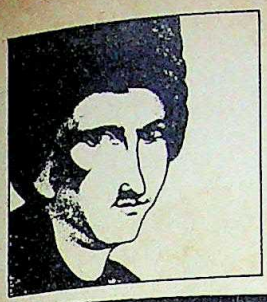
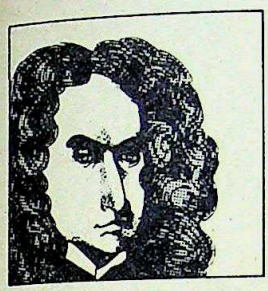


Rousseau's POSTAL CONTRACT

A SERVICE SHOULD BE TAILORED TO A PERSON'S NEEDS

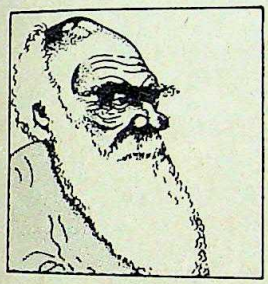
SPEED POST : *Personalised Contract*



Newton's FOURTH LAW

WHATEVER IS POSTED MUST BE DELIVERED

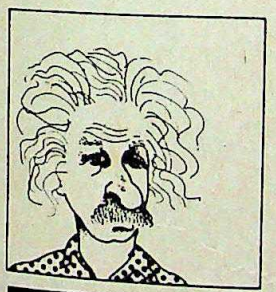
SPEED POST : *Guaranteed Delivery*



Darwin's NATURAL SELECTION

ONLY THE MOST RELIABLE SHALL SURVIVE

SPEED POST : *Reliable, Time-bound*



Einstein's verdict on POSTAL LIMIT

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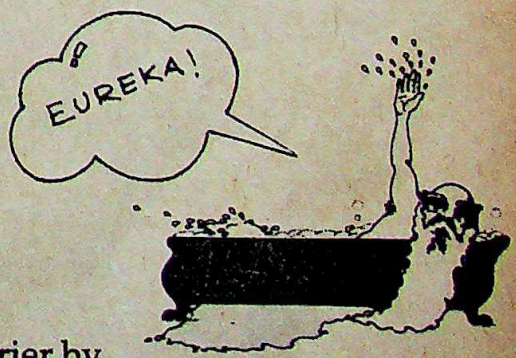

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to the Article in the Akali demand. In fact, in a letter to the prime minister, Rajiv said that the executive did not have the power to hold any talks on the basis of Article 51.

Mann meantime is continuing to up the ante. After the talks, he told INDIA TODAY: "There are three stages to the solution: the presentation of the Sikh case, negotiations and a final settlement." Traversing even the first stage, however, has proved tricky: there are just too many factions that Mann has to mollycoddle. Says Akali Dal(M) leader Gurtej Singh: "The bitterness of the past few years has made both sides take hard postures." Senior leaders of the other Akali Dals have maintained a studied silence.

Included in the Akali demands is the formal extension of an invitation to the militants to participate in the talks. In fact, on the day of the joint Akali conference empowering Mann to meet Chandra Shekhar, militant leader Gurbachan Singh Manochal said in a signed article in a Punjab daily that all Akali groups should subordinate themselves—or, even better, dissolve themselves as political entities—and allow the militants to lead the community. Then, on December 25, in an obvious move to rock the boat, the Babbar Akali Dal, was formed with the "objective of forming Khalistan" and expressing disapproval of the traditional Akali leadership.

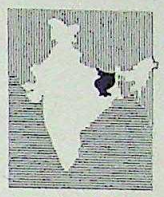
Expectedly, Mann did not meet Chandra Shekhar on his own steam. Among those who mediated included two Janata Dal functionaries, Darshan Singh Jidda and Captain Vikram Singh, and a Chandigarh-based lawyer, Ranjan Lakhanpal, who is an active member of the Punjab Sangharsh Morcha launched a few months ago. In addition, the Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Harmohan Dhawan, also had talks with Mann. Much before the date for the talks was finalised, in fact, Mann's supporters were busy drawing up the controversial memorandum. Among those on the job was Gurbir Singh, who was associated with the Rajiv-Longowal accord in 1985. Said he, explaining the belligerence evident in the memorandum: "The Sikhs lost trust in the government over the past five years. They want to resolve the issues once and for all."

The Shekhar-Mann talks could crack the ice, but unless the Akalis bring an element of reasonableness to the negotiations, the talks will finally lead nowhere. —KANWAR SANDHU

BIHAR

Tall Claims

Yadav's oath lacks weight



THE doughty Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav has made a New Year resolution. Greeting people over the Patna station of AIR on January 1 he promised to usher in a year of "progress, prosperity and rural reconstruction".

Tall claims all. One, he had made similar noises when he assumed office 10 months ago. Two, where are the resources? It is an open secret in Patna that the economy has hit rock-bottom. But then Bihar is part of the syndrome afflicting the whole country. The Centre's financial mess is bigger: a Rs 13,000 crore budget deficit, a 12 per cent inflation rate, and a terrible balance of payments situation. Some of the causes: financial mismanagement, expensive palliatives given by populist chief executives and an embroilment with politicking at the cost of administration.

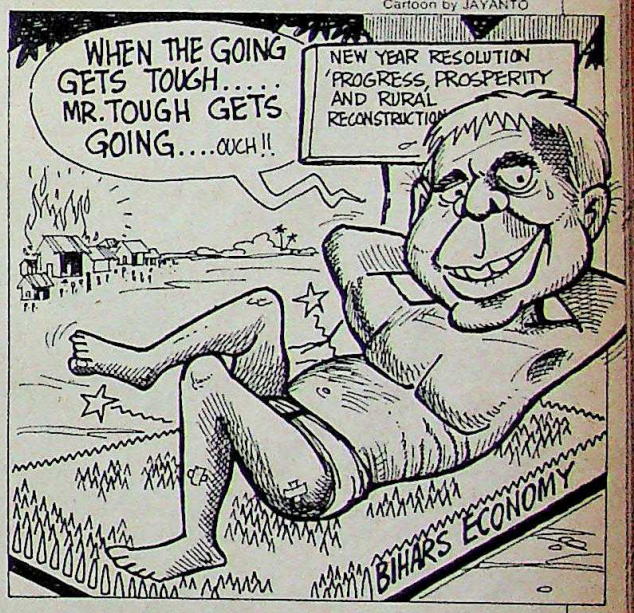
For example, when even the Bihar Chief Secretary Kamla Prasad has conceded that the state is facing financial constraints, Yadav's pronouncements can only be seen as attempts to mollify his electorate. Look at this: Yadav has said that his government will take steps to implement a new industrial policy, invite private investment in the power sector, set up the Kanu-Sidhu University in Santhal Parganas and create one lakh jobs.

The fact is, during Yadav's regime, Bihar has sunk deeper into the quagmire of poverty. The estimated Rs 1805-crore budget expenditure for 1990-91 was slashed down to Rs 1,391 crore because of the failure to mop up the rest termed as additional resource. Till October last, out of the 80 per cent of the budget allocation for ongoing projects, only Rs 594 crore was released for developmental activities and only Rs 325 crore utilised. For all this the opposition leader Jagannath Mishra has put the blame on Yadav's inaction and mismanagement.

Yadav in private now blames the bureaucracy for keeping him in the dark. The truth is, for the first six months of his term he threw himself into raiding government offices to fight corruption and inject efficiency instead of working out planning strategies. Then the Mandal bomb exploded and the caste-ridden bureaucracy sat back allowing the crisis to deepen further which was followed by the pro-Ram Janmabhoomi agitation. Result: negligible revenue collection.

Yadav did try an ingenious way to raise money which misfired. In the middle of last year he summoned the officials of the Coal India Ltd (CIL), the public sector coal mining giant with three subsidiaries in the state, and forced them to cough up Rs 90 crore towards pending dues. But the Government's hopes of netting an estimated Rs 1,125 crore through mineral cess alone received a set-back when last month the CIL obtained a stay taking advantage of the Supreme Court judgement in a case filed by India Cement against the Tamil Nadu Government which held that the state legislature has no power to impose cess on the royalty on mineral rights. Other companies followed CIL.

Cartoon by JAYANTO



An irate Mishra said that the government should have either forced the Centre to amend the statute or should have slapped a heavy tax on the land being used by the mining companies.

Clearly, weighed down by heavy odds, Yadav has to do more than just make boastful promises if he wants the state to prosper. —FARZAND AHMED

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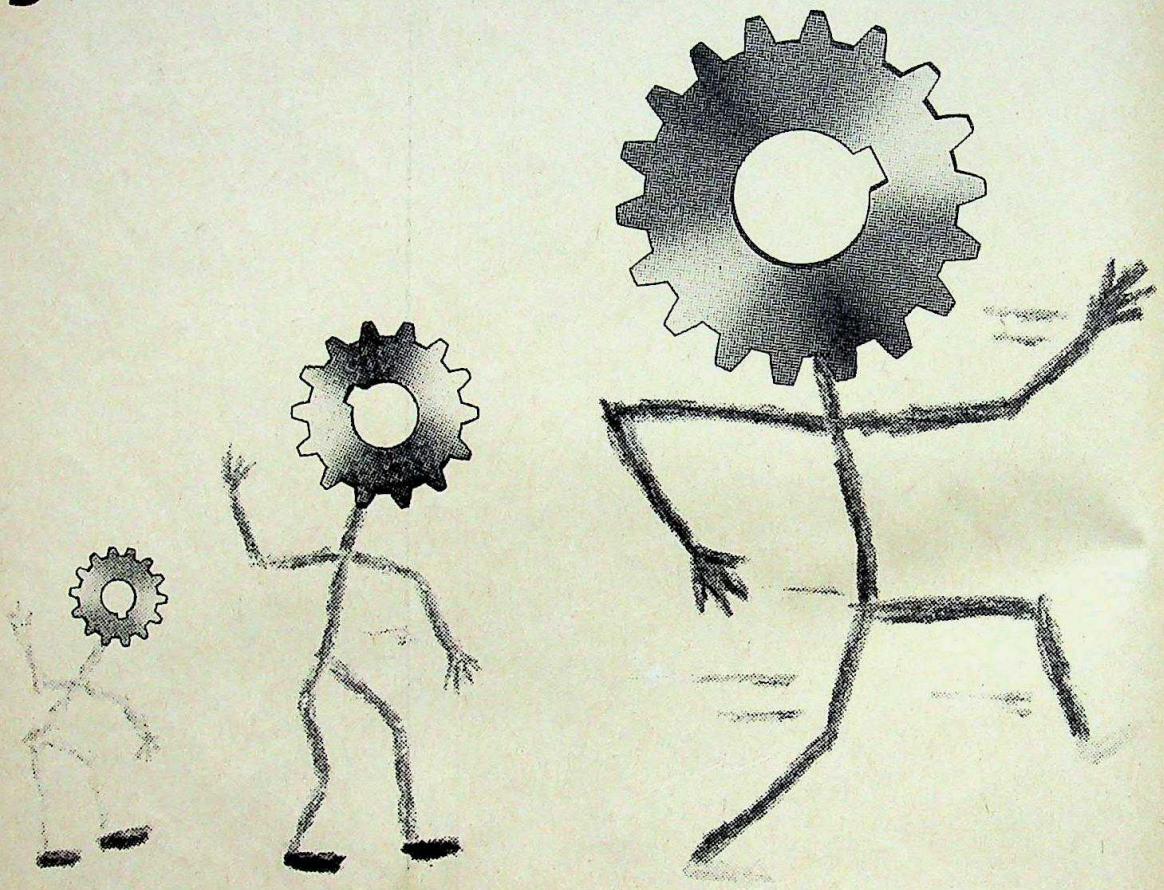

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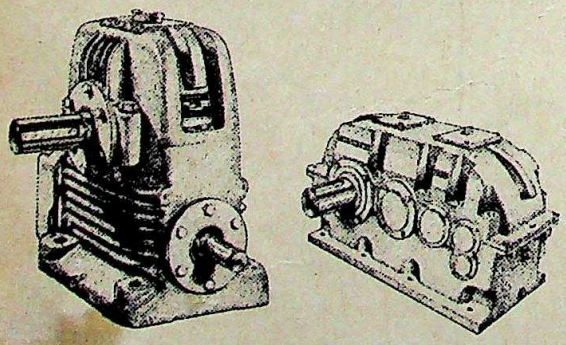

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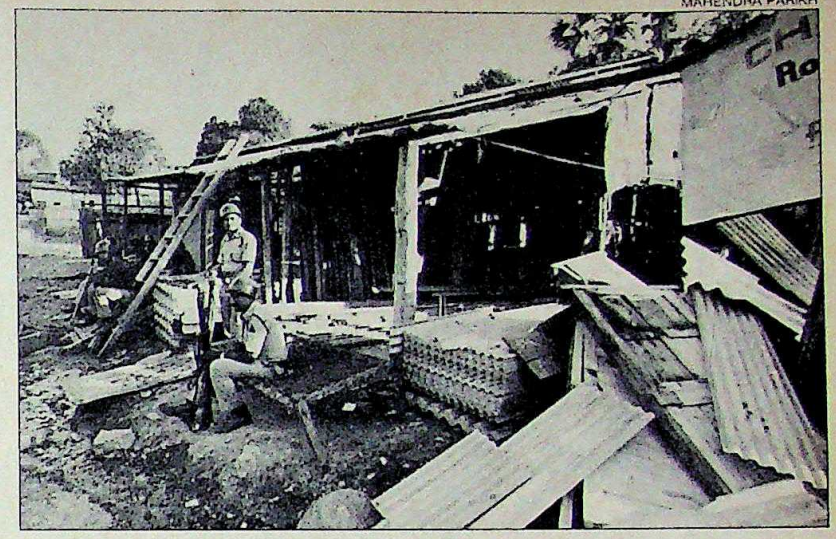
SHARAD PAWAR

Under Attack

High command turns screws

MAHENDRA PARIKH



Riot struck Jogeshwari: local dispute

FOR a while, the question on everybody's lips was: after Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, was it Maharashtra's turn? Last fortnight's scenario of strife in Maharashtra, the third major Congress(I)-ruled state, appeared chillingly similar to what occurred in the two southern states last year—as voices of dissent are raised within the ruling party, communal violence breaks out, leading to the chief minister's removal. And when communal riots in Bombay led to the killing of six people, it sparked off wild rumours about Chief Minister Sharad Pawar's ouster. Pawar was already under pressure from a section of his party for the last few days.

The first salvo was fired by Finance Minister Ramrao Adik just as the winter session of the state Assembly was concluding in Nagpur. Adik suddenly issued a call to "Indira loyalists" in the Congress(I) to come together, expressing the grievance that they had not got their due under the leadership of Pawar. In the party's sign language, what Adik was really saying was: the high command has instructed me to start destabilising Pawar.

RAMRAO ADIK

SHARAD PAWAR

Adik appears to have taken on Pawar with the backing of the party high command.

Though Adik lacks a popular base, he makes up for it by retaining close links with powerful party leaders, like R.K. Dhawan, in Delhi. The inescapable conclusion drawn from his statement was that the high command, perturbed by Pawar's cozy closeness to Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, had finally decided to rattle the Maratha chieftain a bit.

Disturbingly, barely a week after Adik's outburst, communal violence broke out in the state capital. Hindus and Muslims clashed in bombay's Jogeshwari suburb, which had escaped communal tension even after the Ram Janmabhoomi issue exploded.

Though a Congress(I) corporator was allegedly involved in the violence, the riots were actually sparked off by some hotheaded youths attacking the police after a boy was stabbed on a sports ground. The police fired on the mob, killing three people, and the conflagration turned communal. But Police Commissioner S. Ramamurthi rushed police reinforcements and successfully contained the conflict. The riots were clearly a local dispute, unrelated to the state's political situation.

Adik, however, kept up the pressure on Pawar. He first flew to Delhi, where he called on Dhawan, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and other leaders. In the capital, he declared in an obvious reference to the Maharashtra chief minister: "No leader is untouchable. We will fight anybody who challenges the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi." Shortly after his return to Bombay, Adik lowered the voice of dissent, insisting that his Nagpur statement was an "innocent" one blown up by the media—even while maintaining that "the Congress(I) has no second or third rank leaders, only Rajiv Gandhi".

At the same time, press reports appeared that the high command was planning to shift not only Pawar but the state Congress(I) chief Sushil Kumar Shinde too. Both Shinde, who is also urban development minister, and Education Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh are regarded as strong candidates for chief ministership. The reports were clearly a warning to Shinde to distance himself from Pawar if he wanted to stay in the race. After the Janata Dal's George Fernandes set the cat among the pigeons by suggesting that Pawar was scheming against Rajiv, Shinde reportedly helped the chief minister pre-empt the negative reaction within the party, thus earning the ire of some Congress(I) leaders in Delhi.

But it was still far from certain if the high command could succeed. The Congress(I) Government has a precarious majority in the 288-member Assembly (141 plus 10 independents), and Pawar is wily and resourceful enough to take a significant number with him if pushed to the edge.

Besides the growing influence of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, even former prime minister V.P. Singh has been drawing huge crowds in the state's backward areas like Marathwada. A divided Congress(I) would be in no position to face the electorate. The hope is that Pawar can be persuaded to take up a senior party post in Delhi, and hand over the reins of the state to a leader acceptable to both sides.

—M. RAHMAN

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SIGN POSTS

CHARGED: By the Delhi Police, 'Sadhvi' Ritambhara, 25, for making provocative speeches. Audio cassettes with her inflammatory rhetoric on the Ayodhya issue have already been banned by the Delhi Police. A criminal case was registered under Section 153 A of the Indian Penal Code.

MANHANDLED: By Orissa Chief Minister Biju Patnaik, three young men who provoked his ire. Part of a group of demonstrators outside his residence, the youths turned abusive when the chief minister did not listen to their demands. Patnaik lost his temper and hit them before handing them over to the police.

APPOINTED: By the Madras High Court, S. Natarajan, a retired Supreme Court judge, to work as president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), till the court decides on the claims of B.S. Adityan and External Affairs Minister V.C. Shukla. Till then they have been told to "keep away" from the IOA.

AWARDED: Marathi dramatist Vijay Tendulkar, 63, the Kalidas Samman, a Rs 1 lakh national award by the Madhya Pradesh Government, for 1990. He has written a number of plays, including *Sakharam Binder* and *Ghasiram Kotwal*, translated into several languages. Tendulkar has also received the Padma Vibhushan for his contribution to theatre.

DIED: Justice J.C. Shah, 85, who investigated the excesses committed during the Emergency. The report of the Commission of Inquiry did not see the light of day with the return of Indira Gandhi to power. Shah was also the assistant special prosecutor in the Mahatma Gandhi murder trial.

DIED: Raghuvir Sahay, 61, well-known poet, author and journalist, of a heart attack in New Delhi. A former editor of the Hindi weekly *Dinaman*, Sahay authored several books. He was also associated with *Navbharat Times* and All India Radio. Sahay was a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award as well.

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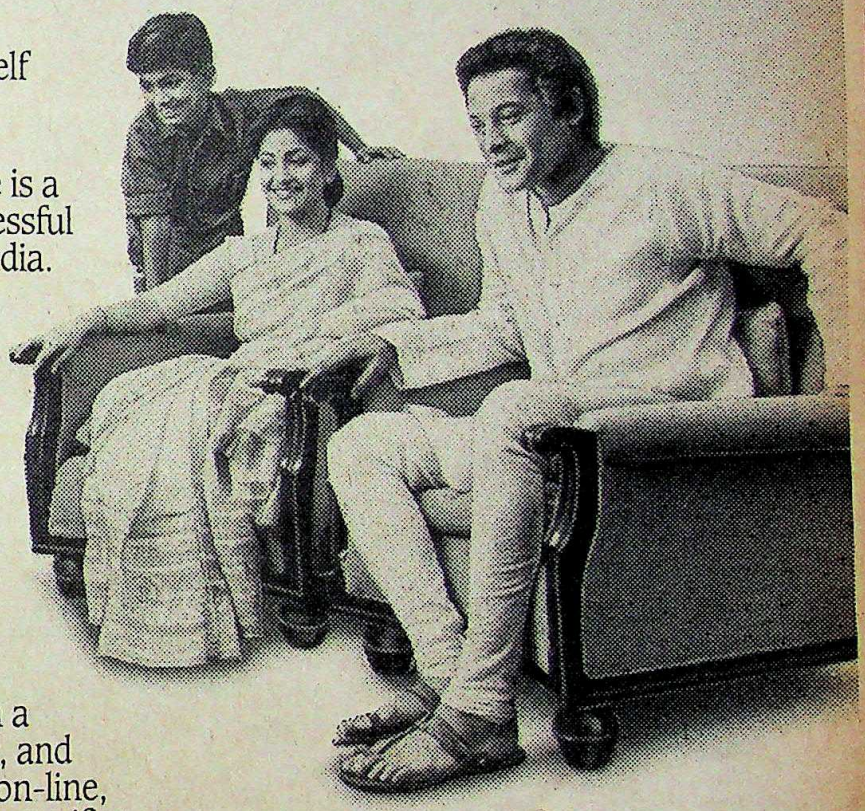

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POLICE EQUIPMENT

Lethal Weapons

Move to introduce more effective anti-riot gear

NOVEMBER 3, 1990: Sixteen people killed in Ayodhya and 72 injured when paramilitary forces opened fire.

December 11, 1990: The Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) gunned down four persons, including two children, in Kanpur.

December 12, 1990: Three persons killed in police firing in Hyderabad.

December 12, 1990: Among the five persons killed in Ahmedabad, three were victims of police firing.

IF there is one thing linking these seemingly isolated incidents it is the unstated shoot-to-kill philosophy of the police in each of them. If that isn't alarming enough, the figures are even more frightening: according to National Crime Records Bureau figures for 1988, out of the 1,111 occasions that the police resorted to firing, 524—which adds up to almost 48 per cent—occurred during riots leading to the death of as many as 128 persons.

In partial response to the crisis in the system, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar announced in Parliament last month that the Government was thinking of setting up a Central riot control police force to deal with communal violence in any part of the country. Home Ministry officials were however sceptical, asking: "What is the police then for?"

Police officials argue that they often have to resort to firing to quell violent mobs because they are limited by the equipment at their disposal.

And they may just be right. To deal with a violent mob, the police has only the obsolete CN (Chloroacetophenone) tear gas, the unwieldy bamboo lathi and the vintage .303 rifle. When the lathi fails, the other option resorted to is the .303 with its overkill capability (its bullet is known to have pierced through three persons.)

But such problems may just be a thing of the past. The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) has fabricated state-of-the-art equipment that will allow the police a lot more options than they have now.

The list of the new items for police use include:

- CR (Dibenzoxazepine) type irritant gas to replace CN.
- Plastic pellets system, which are fired from a modified riot gun.
- A 1.5 inch, 38 mm rubber bullet of 120 grams. This is fired from a special gas gun. However, its cost (at around Rs 100 per bullet) makes it an expensive proposition.
- Plastic bullets. Fired from a .303 using a normal cartridge, the lead is substituted with plastic.
- A water cannon developed by the Defence Fire Research Institute. Mounted on a fire engine, this sprays about 40,000 gallons of water, mixed with an irritant.

Many police officers, however, believe that the new equipment is ineffective and "too soft" in dealing with the violent mobs of today. Explains Delhi Additional Commissioner Police P.R.S. Brar: "Soft options will in the end compel the police to use much more force."

Brar isn't the only one who is sceptical. Says a BPRD official: "Soft options are effective if the crowd is small and civilised. But if the mob is organised and armed, rubber bullets or pellets cannot stop them."

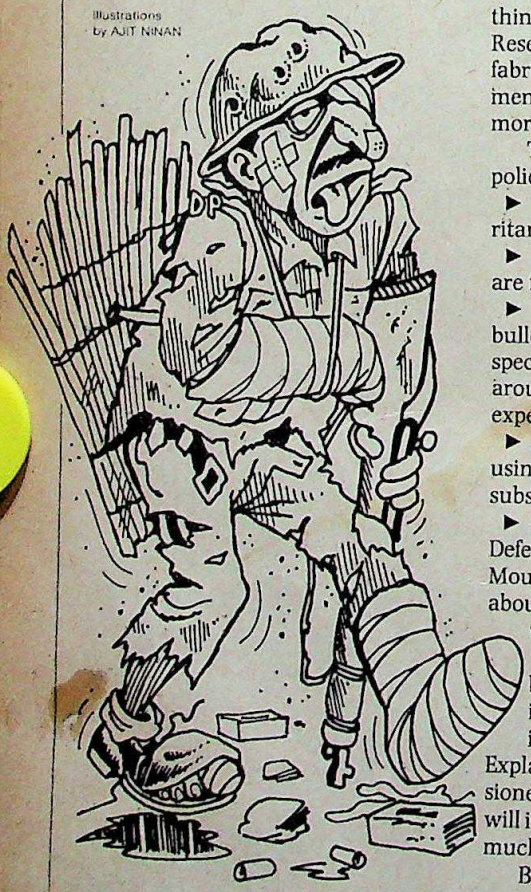
However, BPRD officials emphasise that more important than equipment modernisation, what is needed is a change in the composition of the PAC. "We need to have a multi-communal riot control force instead of a single community force, which tends to become communal," says a BPRD officer.

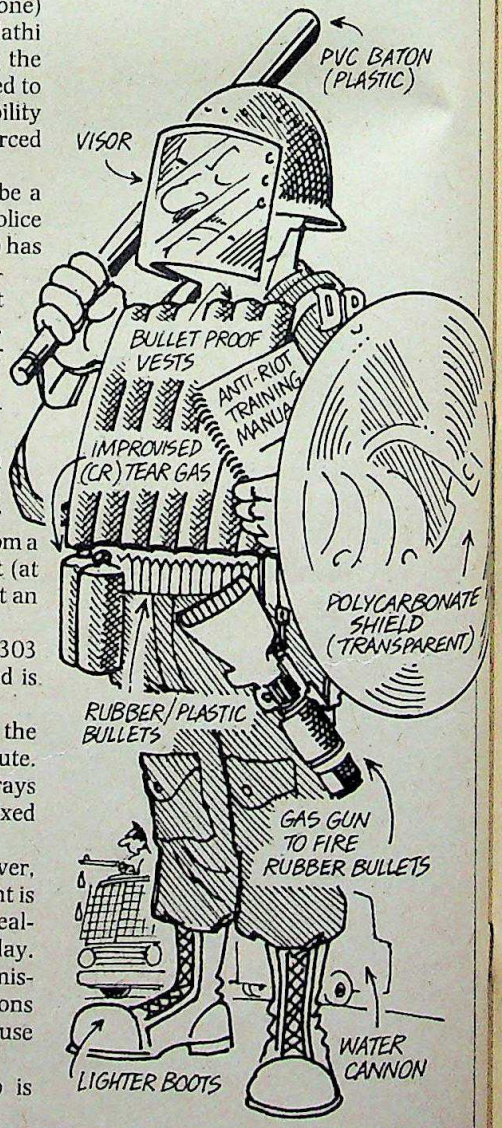
Apart from these debates, bureaucratic redtapism has also prevented the use of the new equipment. Though the BPRD approved the use of CR gas in July 1989, the ministry cleared it only last year. The gas has still not been mass produced. Plastic pellets and rubber bullets are as yet available only in limited quantities.

Until the police finds a way out, it will be forced to depend on the 'hard option'.

—W.P.S. SIDHU

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN





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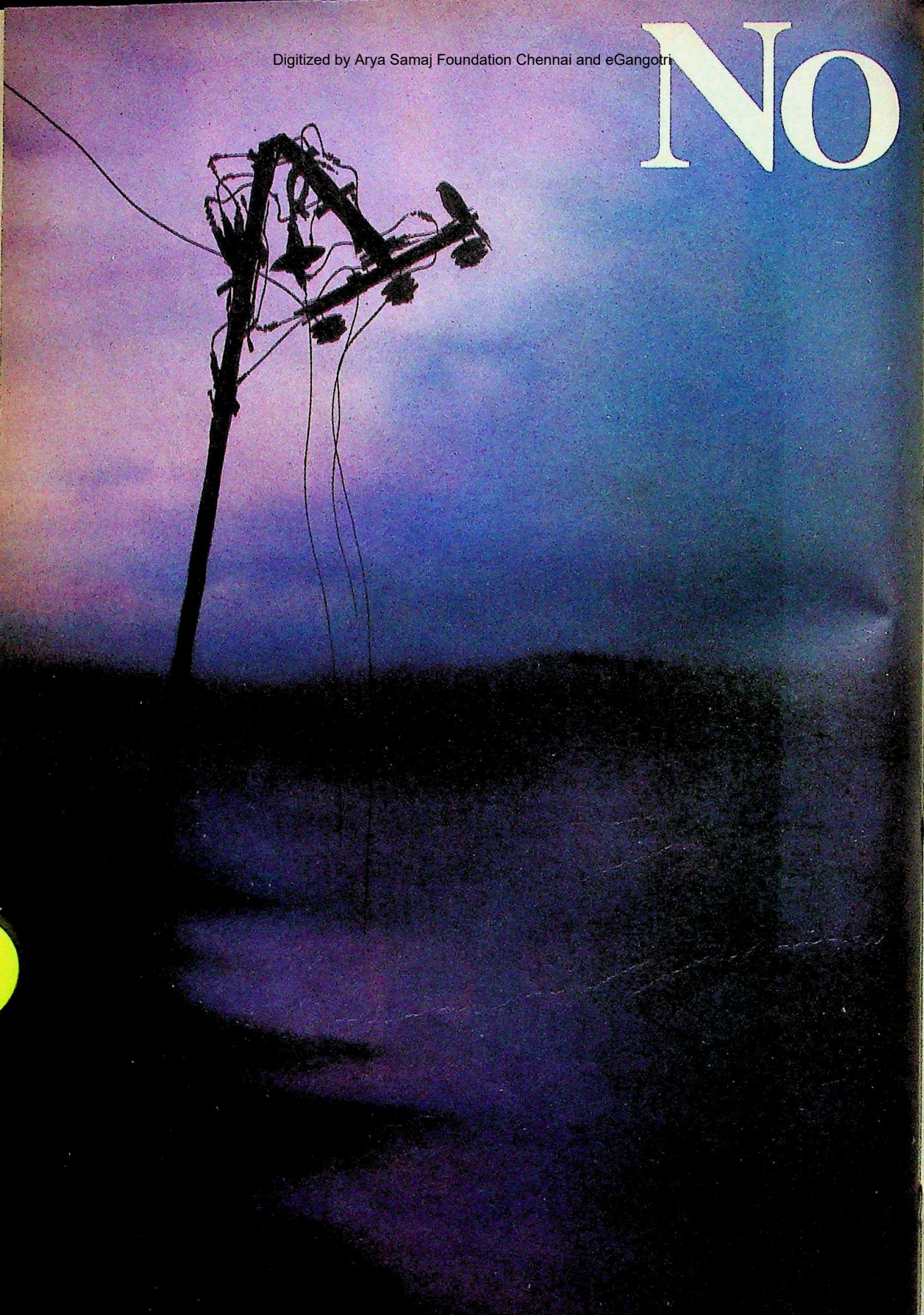

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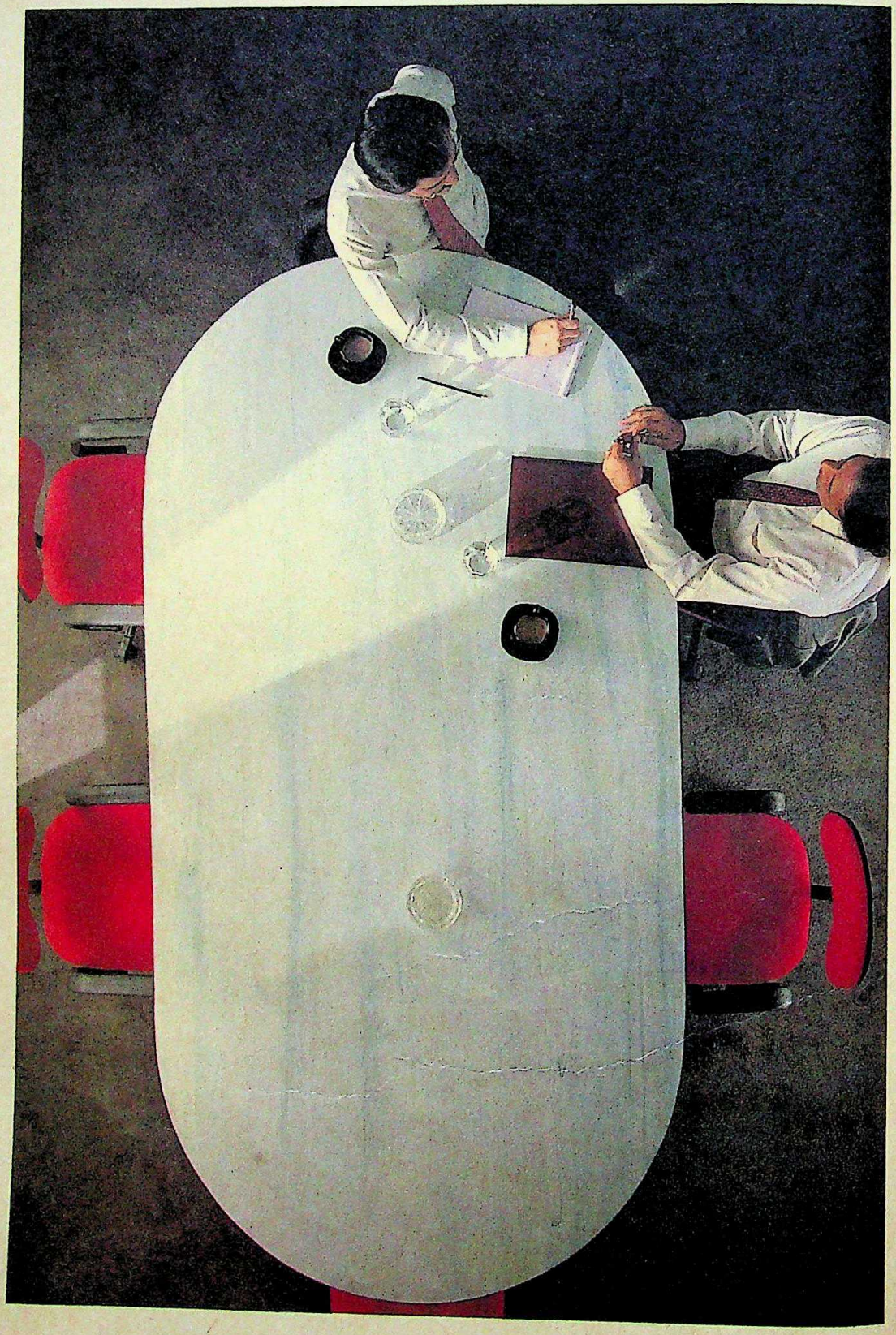

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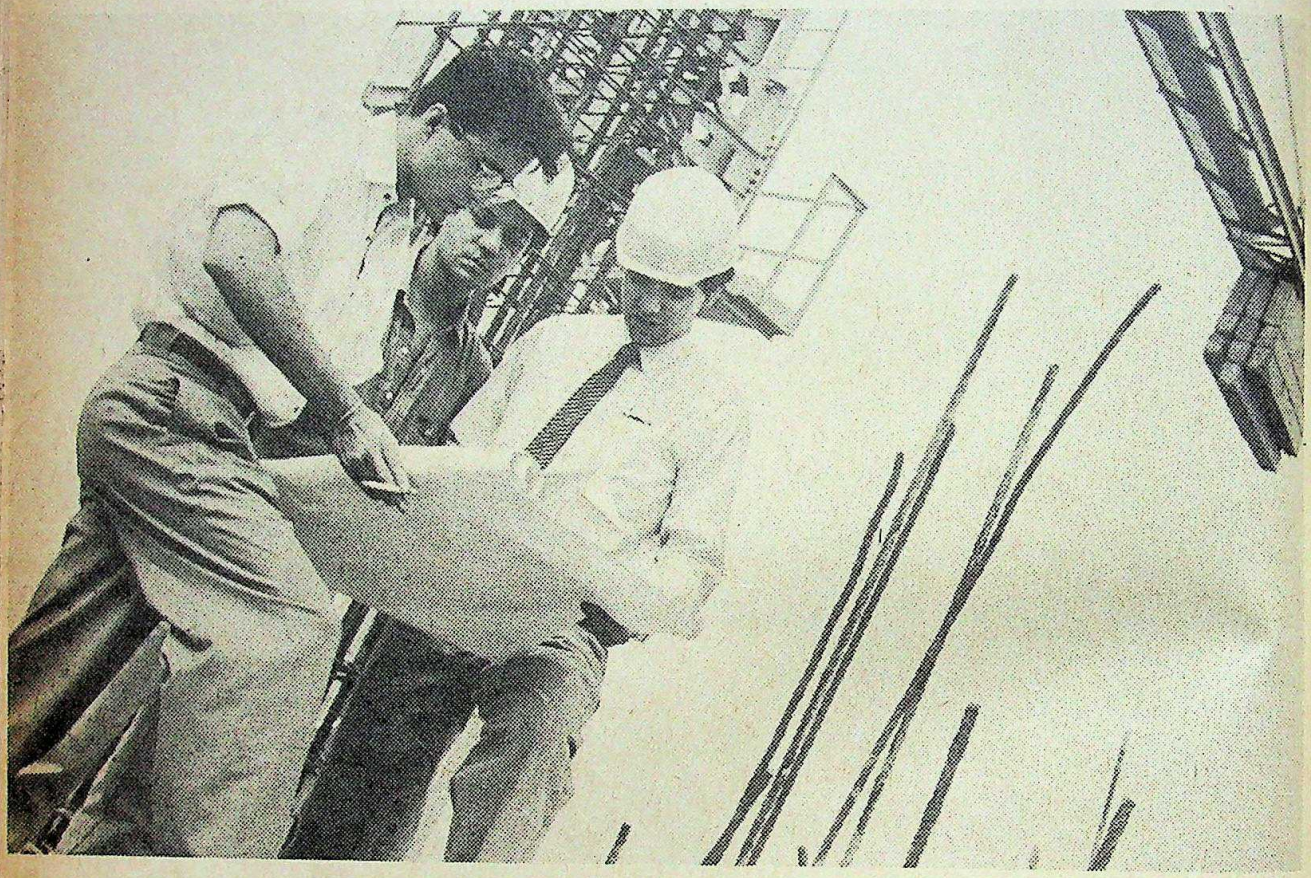

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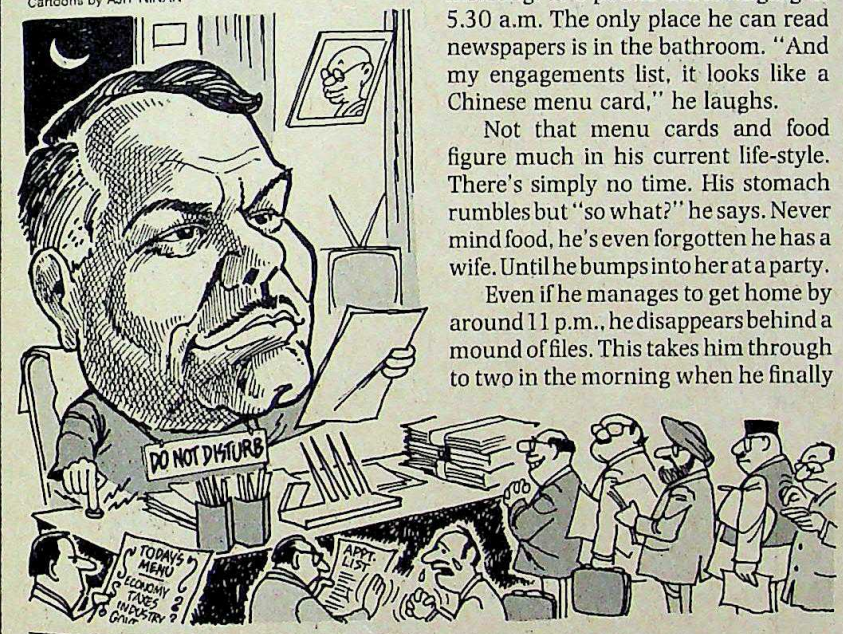
FIRST-TIME MINISTERS

Savouring the Power

By HARINDER BAWEJA

POWER is an aphrodisiac but the laborious grind that lies behind the glamour of high office can often blunt the ecstasy. The sheer volume of work can come as a shock, particularly for first-time ministers. Twenty-two members of Chandra Shekhar's Cabinet are new entrants. A look at how some of the freshers are coping with the demands of the job and the expectations of the public.

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



YASHWANT SINHA, Finance

Files and meetings leave no time for meals or a home life

KNOWN for little else than being a rebel MP and dissident, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha now spends his days in meetings and perusing thick files. Gone are the days when he could sit on the lawn of his home and enjoy the winter sun.

The 53-year-old bureaucrat-turned-politician, who was told by Jayaprakash Narayan not to enter politics on the grounds that his personal finances would not allow a clean career, now finds himself managing the finances of 800 million people.

"It's like any other job," he says. "In the past 13 years as a bureaucrat, I've obviously had to take many important decisions." Yes, his actions now affect many more people. "But I have the training and the habit. You have to be very careful, whether it affects eight or 800 million people." While in office as a bureaucrat he used to say "yes, minister". Sinha laughs: "Now I only have to say yes, prime minister."

What he wasn't trained for was the punishing schedule he has to keep. Meetings start at 8 a.m. and by the time he's through, it's well past one the next morning. The phone starts ringing at 5.30 a.m. The only place he can read newspapers is in the bathroom. "And my engagements list, it looks like a Chinese menu card," he laughs.

Not that menu cards and food figure much in his current life-style. There's simply no time. His stomach rumbles but "so what?" he says. Never mind food, he's even forgotten he has a wife. Until he bumps into her at a party.

Even if he manages to get home by around 11 p.m., he disappears behind a mound of files. This takes him through to two in the morning when he finally puts out the light and snatches a few hours' sleep before the phone wakes him up at 5.30 a.m. and the relentless routine starts all over again.

SHAKEEL-UR-REHMAN, Health

Instead of Urdu poetry, it's surprise visits to hospitals

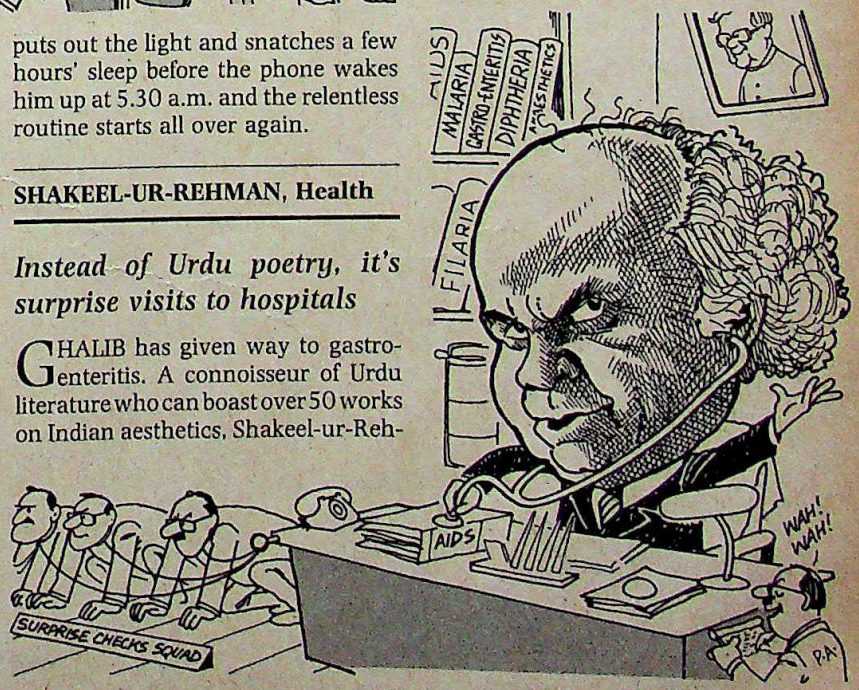
GHALIB has given way to gastro-enteritis. A connoisseur of Urdu literature who can boast over 50 works on Indian aesthetics, Shakeel-ur-Rehman has been so busy mugging up on the diseases of the human anatomy that he's fast becoming a walking medical encyclopaedia.

As minister for health, he's taking a scholarly approach to the subject, as befits the former vice-chancellor of Bihar University. It's almost as if he's cramming for an end-of-term MBBS exam: he knows all the intimate characteristics of malaria, filaria and diphtheria. AIDS and cancer, though, he's still ploughing through and hasn't quite mastered yet.

"I don't look at myself as a minister but as a spiritual father," he says. His manner is that of a gentle paterfamilias. "He issues instructions almost as if he were reciting an Urdu poem," one of his staff says. "But politeness doesn't imply slackness. He ensures that work is done on time."

One of his favourite ploys for keeping his staff on their toes is making sudden, unplanned visits. The first they hear of it is when he gets up and says "right, let's go". And they have no idea where he's going until he instructs the driver. It might be a hospital. Or a government dispensary.

Given Rehman's penchant for surprise visits, he understandably finds rules and procedures irksome. He's been appalled at the state of hospitals. But before he can get anything done he



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has to write to the Lt. Governor of Delhi. To control AIDS in Bombay's red light area, he has to liaise with the Maharashtra chief minister. This minister, it seems, would almost prefer to go himself and personally give the prostitutes a talking to.

To avoid getting a dressing down himself he has to ensure that he makes time for his wife. "Perhaps I should make an appointment to see you?" is one of Mrs Rehman's more restrained reproaches. And she insists that the minister is home in time for dinner before 10—or else.

H.N. YADAV, Textiles

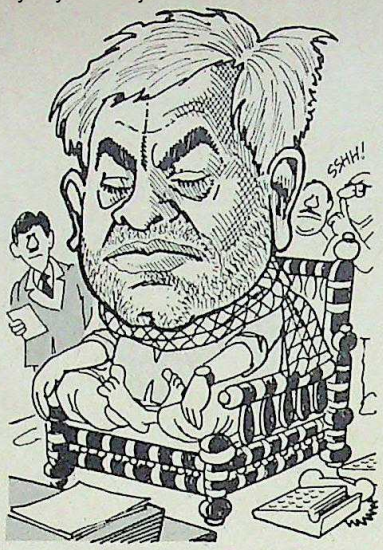
Pepsi notwithstanding, comfort is still sitting cross-legged

HUKUMDEO Narain Yadav says he feels like a bird in a cage. It's easy to see why when you realise that the minister for textiles and food processing has been dragged from the backwaters of Bihar into Delhi's upmarket world of textile fashions and Pepsi Colas.

He hasn't allowed power to dazzle him or change his style. He's comfortable only when he sits cross-legged. The textile minister's chair sits virtually unused. He's even reluctant to sit on the office sofa. *"Hamein to zameen peh baithne ki adat hai"* (I'm used to sitting on the floor), he says.

And while he sits there, in his *padmasan*, he shuts his eyes, in the middle of a sentence. No, he hasn't fallen asleep. He's communicating with God. His ministerial compulsions are eating into his prayer time, he finds. So between files and meetings, he fits in God whenever he can. It's only in the Hindustani ambience of his home that he can do his puja in peace and sing his bhajans. He refuses to take too many calls once he's there because *"sara din to office mein rehte hain"* (I'm in the office all day as it is).

This 51-year-old socialist speaks chaste Hindustani. And his staff understand. "It's all wrong, this belief, that our officers can neither read nor write good Hindi," he says. All his papers and correspondence, in fact, are now written in Hindi.



It will take Yadav some time to become accustomed to the paraphernalia of power. Having a *bangla, gaadi* and saluting sentries still embarrasses him. "My friends always used to tell me, you've only made and unmade ministers but have never been one yourself. So I thought, this time *ban jaate hain.*"

HARMOHAN DHAWAN, Aviation

It's an open house, fast work lots of calls and thinking big

IF you enter the civil aviation minister's office and find a man in a suit, neck tie and heeled shoes, smiling at you as he draws on his cigarette, don't turn back. This is the minister of state (independent charge)—even if he doesn't at all resemble your average neighbourhood politician.

No khadi for industrialist-turned-politician Harmohan Dhawan—who won the Self-Made Industrialist Award in 1970—and who still doesn't feel like a politician, even though he's running the entire show. "I'm running another business organisation. Aviation is another industry," he says.

His style of working is unusual. He keeps an open house which means that you can virtually walk straight into his office or his home, though you might have to wait a while before seeing him. While he's talking to one set of people, another group is huddled on the sofa at the far end of the room while others are in the PA's room and yet another bunch is sipping tea in the private secretary's room.

He says no to no one. Nor does he ever refuse any telephone calls. The strict instruction to his staff is never to spout the *"saab meeting mein hain"* or *"saab naha rahe hain"* (The sahib is in a meeting or he's having a bath) line. But none of this gets in the way of expediting work. One of his officials says with pride: "He is a man in a hurry. Sometimes our system is not able to keep up with him."

Within seven days of becoming minister, Dhawan was aboard the first A320 flight, which resumed service after they had been grounded by the former V.P. Singh government. "It was more of a political decision, wasn't it? Why the hell should I waste my time finding out? I have other things to do. I don't dig files to find skeletons. My priority was to find out if they could be used again."

Harmohan Dhawan says work is his hobby. He thinks big. He must do so if, as he says, he's hellbent on making sure that flights leave on time. Anyone else might take to their beds for a week faced with such a Herculean task. But he refused to be put off: "I'm going to revamp the entire airline structure." This will take in housekeeping, in-flight catering and customer services. The lot. Indian Airlines has already changed its menu and the crew uniform. This man means business.

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When even the latest innovations become history before they become news, there is no time for complacency. Philips* never forgets this. Yes, Philips gave the world the X-ray tube, the audio cassette, the laser video disc and the compact disc, and brought modern lighting and radio to India – but that was yesterday. Today's Philips is already in the future. As always. Philips components lie at the heart of most of today's electronics. Because they're based on Philips' inside knowledge of micro-electronics, our components are chosen worldwide in products ranging from computers to radios. Our professional electronics equipment provides analytical, testing, communication and automation tools for changing R&D and industrial needs. Our extraordinary audio equipment breaks barriers in sound. Our lighting technology is so advanced that it sets the standards for others to follow. And our TVs let you see right into tomorrow. We've given India our best for over 60 years. We'll do it for the next hundred.

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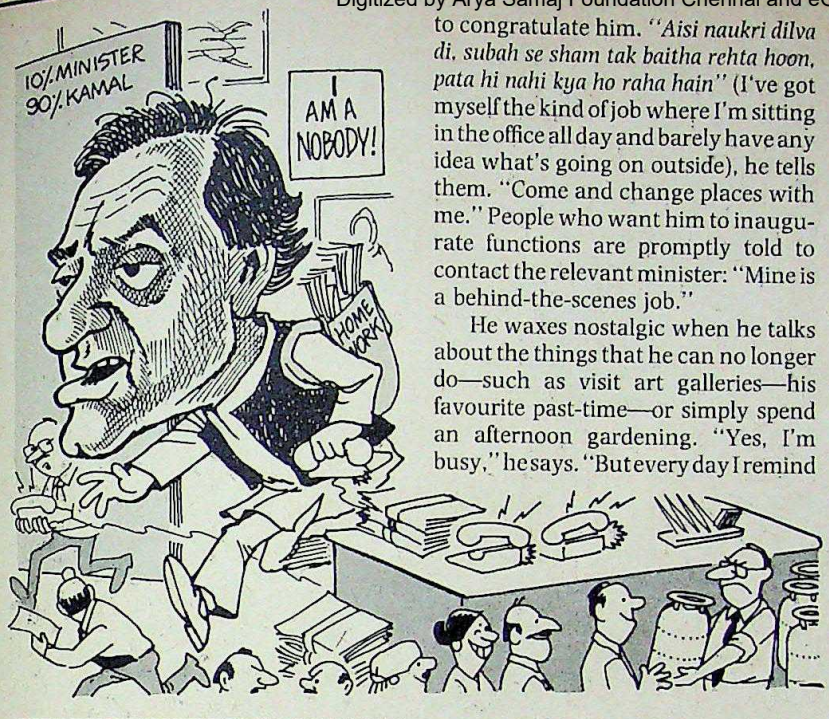


KAMAL MORARKA, PM's Office

Endless files and petitioners but no visits to art galleries

FOR Kamal Morarka, being the minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office is a bit like being back at school. There's endless reading. Even when the day finishes, the work doesn't. He goes home with his bags full of homework. The only difference is that someone carries his huge *basta* for him.

"I hate files. They are not my cup of tea," he says with some feeling. But he knows there is absolutely no alternative. "In order to discuss a subject with the prime minister intelligently I should know as much, if not more, than him."

So his time is measured in files. The rhythm of the day is punctuated by the shutting and opening of new files. More often than not, the phone rings the moment he's begun to concentrate or the peon arrives with a message.

When he's not shuttling between the prime minister and his files, he's meeting all kinds of people. One wants a posting for his sister-in-law, another a telephone connection for his brother. Yet another's looking for a private room in a hospital for his ailing wife. What does he do? "*Arre bhai*, a guy's paid money and booked his phone, if I can expedite it, why not. I don't have time to go to his house to see if his wife is really ill."

A lot of his friends have been calling to congratulate him. "*Aisi naukri dilva di, subah se sham tak baitha rehta hoon, pata hi nahi kya ho raha hain*" (I've got myself the kind of job where I'm sitting in the office all day and barely have any idea what's going on outside), he tells them. "Come and change places with me." People who want him to inaugurate functions are promptly told to contact the relevant minister: "Mine is a behind-the-scenes job."

He waxes nostalgic when he talks about the things that he can no longer do—such as visit art galleries—his favourite past-time—or simply spend an afternoon gardening. "Yes, I'm busy," he says. "But every day I remind myself that I'm a nobody. I don't want to get caught in official trappings or give the impression that I am a power centre. Let me put it like this. Ten per cent I'm minister and 90 per cent I am Kamal Morarka."

JAI PRAKASH, Petroleum

A mela atmosphere with little real work and much posturing

IF there's one minister who is conscious of ministerial perks and trappings, it's the deputy minister for petroleum and chemicals, and communications. Overnight, the rustic, kurta pyjama-clad, former commander of the infamous Green Brigade—who was in the news during the Meham rigging controversy—has turned into a suave *bandgala* coat-*mantri*.

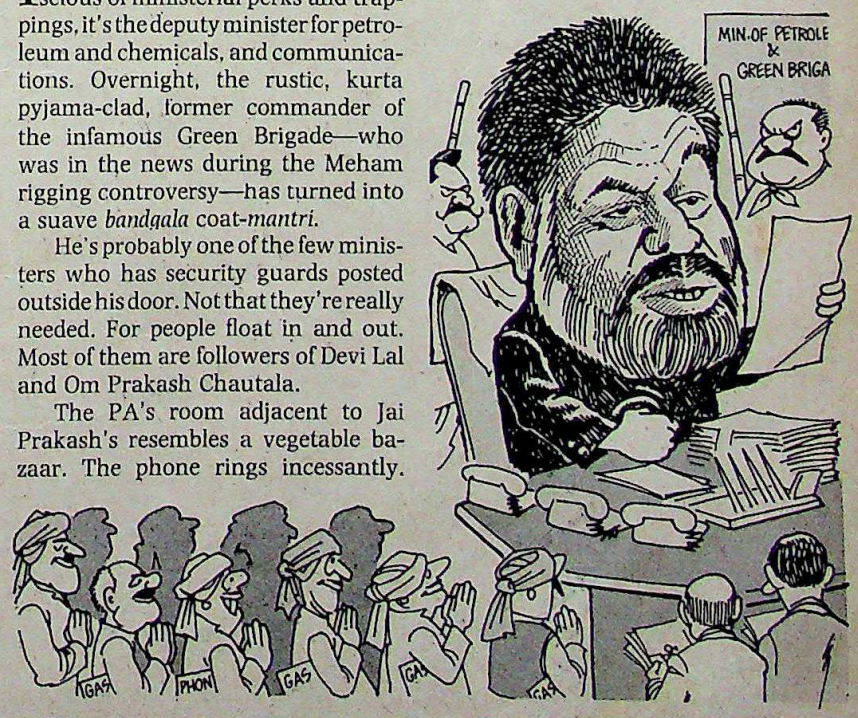
He's probably one of the few ministers who has security guards posted outside his door. Not that they're really needed. For people float in and out. Most of them are followers of Devi Lal and Om Prakash Chautala.

The PA's room adjacent to Jai Prakash's resembles a vegetable bazaar. The phone rings incessantly. There are people sitting on chairs and sofas, some are standing and yet more waiting to enter.

The minister himself looks happy, perched on his *gaddi*. A pleased smile flits across his face every time the phone buzzes or he presses the bell and the peon rushes in. The elation of possessing power shows. How does it feel to be a minister? "*Badhiya lagta hai. Ab Bombay jaa raha hoon, jahaz se. Vahan Bombay High mein ek petroleum plant hain apna*" (It feels great. I'm flying off to Bombay right now. We have a petroleum plant at Bombay High).

People leaving the office look pretty pleased too, having persuaded him to recommend their cases. These are usually one of two things. Either a gas or a telephone connection. "He sanctions at least 20 out-of-turn connections," one of his assistants says. "*Kya burai hai is mein* (What's wrong with that)? The youth are happy that a youngster (he's the youngest minister at 35) has become a minister."

His visitors keep him busy. Which is just as well for he has little to do. Cabinet ministers have yet to allocate work to him. The few files relating to communications come to the Petroleum Ministry. And his officials tell him what they contain. "*Hamara kaun sa dimagi kaam hai. Hum bas instructions de dete hein*" (My work hardly involves much thought. It's more a case of giving instructions), he declares with a flourish. This minister's staff probably do all the work while he concentrates on the style.



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Cost Cutting Manoeuvres

WHEN we are in economic distress, the defence budget is one of the first to come in for critical review, because of its size. Are deep cuts possible, without jeopardy? Historically, we have tended to treat defence as too esoteric for public debate. The people and Parliament have generously assumed that the Government knows best, as only it has access to much of the information (due to over-classification) and to expert advice. The establishment was pleased to perpetuate this myth. This must be the best kept hoax in India since 1947!

For some years, there has been more media interest in defence. Contributing to this was the increase in defence expenditure from under 2 per cent of the GDP to almost 4; beginnings of investigative journalism, assisted by disgruntled folk who discovered the joys of leaking; and a new phenomenon, the appearance of sophisticated sales pitches by competing weapon salesmen disguised as in depth technical and tactical analyses by anonymous specialists. The image of the 'competent professional' also took a hard knock after the 1962 debacle. John Kenneth Galbraith wrote of that time, that the Indian Army was like any other professional army in the world; with a few very competent officers; a few incompetent ones and a large number of amiable frauds!

What the media concentrated on however, was on the juicier bits, the scandals. Professional analyses were few. These did include suggestions for economies in defence; matters like lack of adequate coordination among the services, coupled with empire-building, leading to waste; terms and conditions of service; and administrative and logistic streamlining to ensure a better 'tooth-to-tail ratio' (this unfortunate cliche has confused the issue enormously; in a modern force, the 'teeth' are so sophisticated that they require an array of 'dental specialists' to keep them biting fit! What are teeth and what is tail?). These areas and similar ones are important, and have to be focused on periodically. This will ensure cost effectiveness without compromising on combat effectiveness. However, the pay-offs from these are in the range of homoeopathic doses. If we are after deep cuts, we will have to look elsewhere.

The only way of making large reductions in defence, is to so organise things, that the threats to the country's national vital interests are largely reduced. We have never attempted such an exercise in any systematic manner, ever. Largely because we do not have the wherewithal for perspective planning of national strategy and national security strategy. It is not surprising that any analysis of defence, brings us back again and again, to this basic lack, which we have been stubbornly ignoring. This reminds me of Nani Palkhivala's classic, that the peacock should not have been our national bird, but the ostrich! Certainly, there has been euphoria on occasion, that now that Mao has smiled, we can start dismantling our defences along the Himalayas. Or, now that we have a government in Delhi that is going to kiss and make up with all our other neighbours, we can start major reductions in defence expenditure. The response of the uniformed fraternity to this has been, "You have to work on the capabilities of potential adversaries and not on their intentions. The smile can change overnight to a frown, and capabilities take long to create." Calculations of capabilities must however, be modulated by political judgement as to the probability of a clash of vital interests.

We can lower regional tensions and defence expenditures if we opt for a nuclear deterrent; aim for a South Asian confederation; get Pakistan to freeze the Kashmir problem and settle the border question with China.

IF this is not done, to give an extreme example, Canada might have to create adequate forces to deter the USA! But this political judgement must be the result of something much more than a deep breath and an intuitive 'because I think so'! It must be based on systematic analyses, with different levels of national aims for a given time frame, each spawning a different threat level. None of these can happen without a multi-disciplinary planning infrastructure.

In my view, we would have excellent chances of lowering threats and tensions in the region, reducing infructuous defence expenditures, bringing prosperity to all countries, along with greater regional cooperation in all spheres, if we adopt the following policies: openly opt for a nuclear deterrent; aim for a South Asian confederation based on SAARC in say, 20 years; get Pakistan and Kashmir to agree to freezing of the Kashmir problem for the same duration, after which Kashmiris can opt either for India, Pakistan or for joining the confederation as a separate state; settle the border question with China by genuine give and take, and not on the basis of 'My country, right or wrong'; negotiate with Pakistan and China for tripartite conventional force reductions of deployable forces; and limitations of nuclear forces; internally, in the Indian Union, devolve more real power to the states to make the set up truly federal.

Some would consider these unattainable ever, or not in the time frames indicated. So be it. But do we have means of analysing policy packages such as this along with alternatives and respective costs? Without these essential inputs, how can we stimulate educated public or parliamentary debate on defence? Without such an exercise, we cannot hope to get even the semblance of a consensus among the various political parties. A consensus, not only prevents discontinuities and U-turns with every change of government, but also acts as a force multiplier indicative of the 'national will'.

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A TYPEWRITER COMPANY.
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What would you call a company that dares to stop production for four months, to harness technology and give the consumer a better product at a lesser price? What would you call a company that discovers the chip-on-glass multiline display for typewriters and on discovering it finds the world beating a path to their doorstep? What would you call a team of young entrepreneurs who challenge manufacturing gospels and create the world's first bilingual word processing technology for Indian languages? Would you still call us a typewriter company? Or isn't that just the tip of the iceberg? We're really in the business of building technology. And shaping it to do things never done before. Ask any Networker. Ask over 1000 of them. Ask our 400 or more engineers or 100 MBAs. Their answers will not differ, **"Technology is our product"**.

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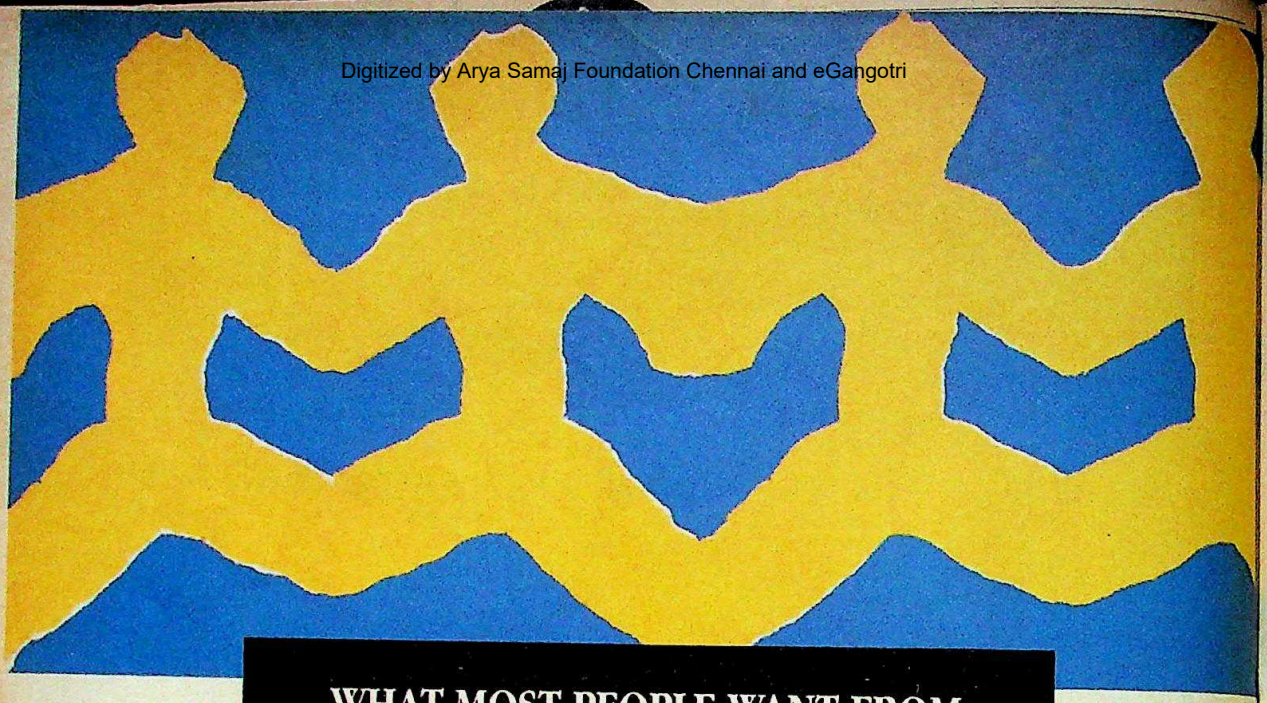

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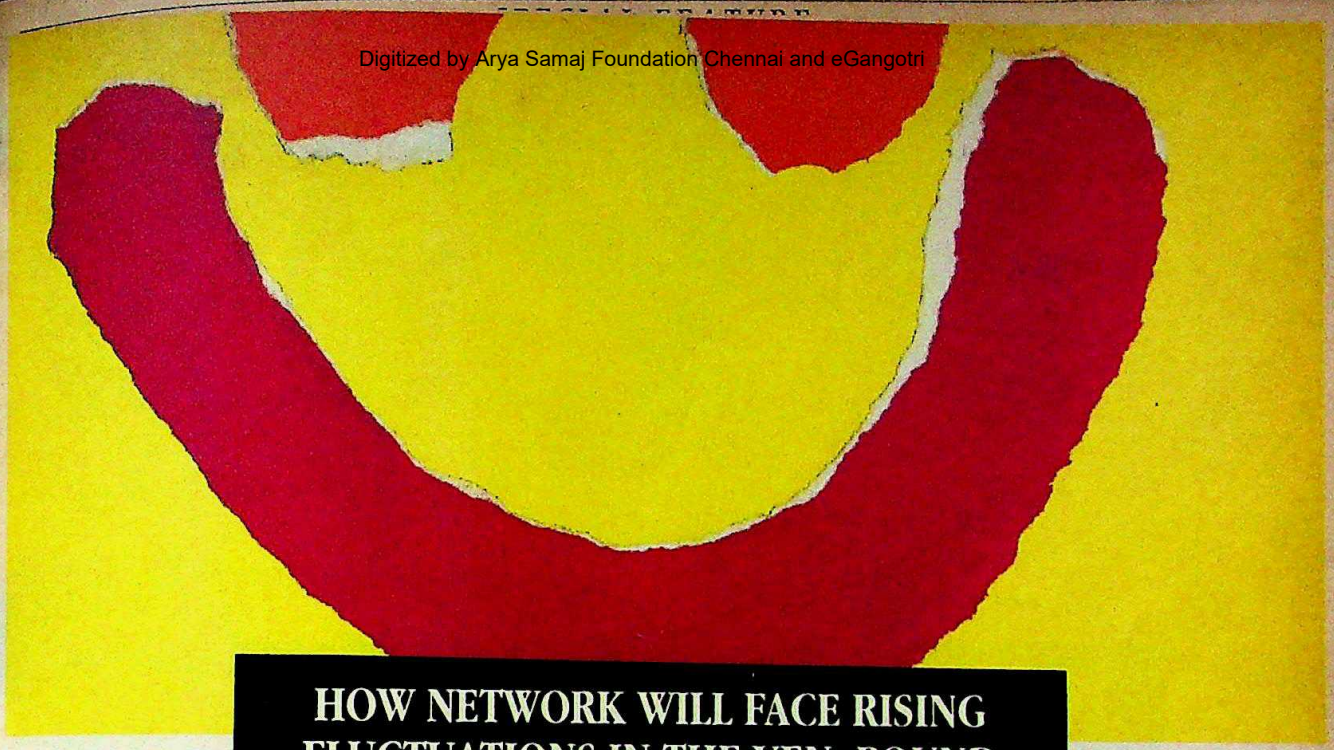

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HOW THE РУССКИЙ POLITBURO LEARNT TO TALK WITH THEIR FINGERS.

At Network we made it happen. By developing an electronic typewriter in the Russian script. An order that was readied in less than 90 days. That's a record. Because even IBM wasn't equipped to handle such pressure-cooker deadlines. By this we don't just mean high-skills in computer hardware and software. We're talking about the ability to develop complex products in the shortest possible time. And you don't need to know the Russian language to see that.

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The point we're making is that the world will be our marketplace. Our quest for the best in medical electronics includes a tie-up with Picker International Inc. of USA. We have teamed up with Robert Bosch GmbH. of Germany in the field of plant automation. Our collaboration with Canon Inc., Japan, in the area of office automation will lead us to newer technological feats. We're currently exploring a technology called "bubble-jet" which makes typewriters so silent, you'll hear a pin drop. What will see us through is not time, place or events. But our core values or "core competencies" - in marketing, R&D, manufacturing and customer support. That's the solid rock on which we build. That's what makes us Network. That's our history. And that will be our future.

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NAMAS BHOJANI

SHIVAJI PARK

Cricketing Cradle

Bombay's popular ground, long considered the country's cricketing nursery, continues to nurture exceptional talent.

By SALIL TRIPATHI

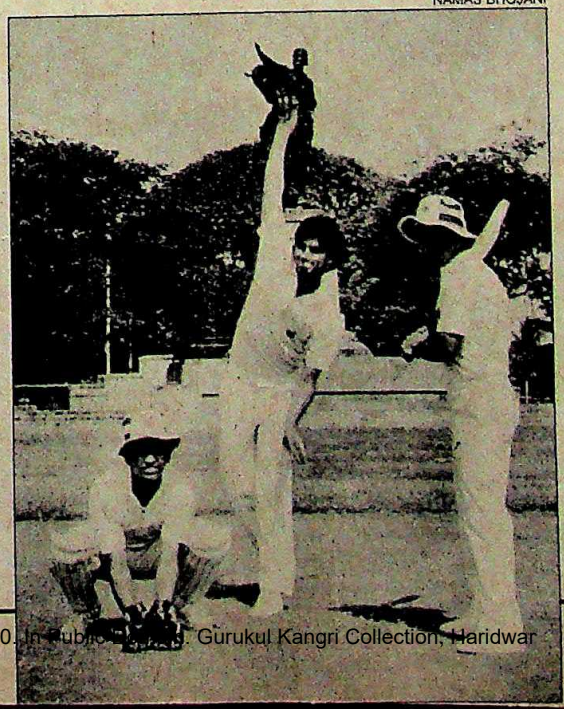
A tattered, yellowing tent. An old *mali* wearing an outsized khaki shirt and shorts. Weeds growing all over the outfield that would embarrass any amateur weekend gardener. A rickety scoreboard. A quiet drizzle. And a crowded ground, with many matches on at the same time, where the third slip in one match has only to turn around to become mid-on in another, and third man in the third. It seems chaotic and disorderly, but in the anarchy there seems to be a purpose.

In the tent, as on the field, are some of the keenest, most eager young cricketers one can find. They look scrawny and bony, but when they grow up they could become a Sunil Gavaskar, a Dilip Vengsarkar, an Ajit Wadekar, a Dilip Sardesai, a Ravi Shastri, a Sanjay Manjrekar, and, yes, a Sachin Tendulkar, though he isn't a grown-up yet. Along with Praveen Amre and Vinod Kambli, Manjrekar and Tendulkar lead a powerful revival of the traditional Dadar-Shivaji Park domination of Indian batting.

If the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton and Harrow, battles at Lord's or Bridgetown have been saved and won due to the playing fields of Bombay's Shivaji Park and Dadar Union. For the batsmen who have emerged from these clubs with no facilities but loads of history and tradition, are full of grit. They give Indian batting its spine. Says Milind Rege, former Bombay player: "Bombay produces the country's gutsiest cricketers."

From the moment they open their eyes they think, dream, and hear cricket. As does anyone who lives near Shivaji Park. From seven in the morning, every day of the week, the reassuring thuds of the willow reverberate in the vast ground in central

NAMAS BHOJANI



Shivaji Park (top); Gavaskar and Kulkarni at the ground

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Bombay, and the air carries the smell of leather, even as RSS men perform their daily exercises and the statue of Shivaji looks on vigilantly.

All over the ground, hundreds of schoolboys, donning flannels, bat and bowl at the eleven nets with determination, their minutest error spotted and corrected by eagle-eyed coaches like Vasant Amladi and Vithal Patil.

Over the years, Shivaji Park has become the metaphor for the country's cricketing nursery. There are other grounds too in Bombay—the Tairsee nets in downtown Bombay where Vinoo Mankad used to teach, or the sylvan MIG ground in midtown Bombay, where Vasu Paranjpe, who played for 35 years for Dadar Union, still teaches—but nothing as symbolic of the city's cricketing prowess as Shivaji Park.

THOSE practising there follow a tough schedule: bowlers bowl two hours at a go and many of today's Test stars say they used to practise six hours a day in their formative years. Cricket maniacs like Sachin Tendulkar, during his summer vacations, used to practise from 7 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. then play a game through the day, and then be at the nets again till 7 p.m.

As the days get warmer, the tents at Shivaji Park become a beehive of activity, as young aspirants rub shoulders with Test stars and a few veterans. The youngsters are all eyes and ears as the old-timers like Vijay Bhosale recall the days of Shivaji Park alumni and their glorious deeds: how Sunil Gavaskar batted even when he was ill and carried his bat through the innings, or how Padmakar Shivalkar bowled like a man possessed.

The youngsters, grow up listening to inspiring tales: of Gavaskar at Port of Spain and Vengsarkar at Lord's; they learn their arithmetic memorising cricket statistics. Recalls Bombay skipper Ravi Shastri: "When I grew up there were never less than four

The Giants From Shivaji Park

Youngsters grow up listening to glorious exploits of Shivaji Park cricketers.

	S.M. Gavaskar	Polly Umrigar
NO. OF TESTS	125	59
NO. OF RUNS	10,122	3,631
AVERAGE	51.12	42.22

	Dilip Sardesai	V. Manjrekar
NO. OF TESTS	30	55
NO. OF RUNS	2,001	3,208
AVERAGE	39.23	39.12

	Ajit Wadekar	Sandeep Patil
NO. OF TESTS	37	29
NO. OF RUNS	2,113	1,588
AVERAGE	31.07	36.93

	D. Vengsarkar	Ravi Shastri
NO. OF TESTS	111	73
NO. OF RUNS	6,710	3,460
AVERAGE	43.57	36.04

	S. Manjrekar	S. Tendulkar
NO. OF TESTS	16	11
NO. OF RUNS	1,106	588
AVERAGE	48.08	39.20

Statistics : Anant Gaundalkar

players from Bombay in the Indian team, and that rubbed off on some of us. Representing India was the ultimate goal."

What has nurtured this spirit of Bombay is keen competition at every level. Writing in his autobiography, *Sunny Days*, Sunil Gavaskar comments: "Cricket in Bombay, at all levels, is tough and no quarters are given and none asked for. Even a friendly fixture is played grimly and with seriousness. Right from his school days, a Bombay cricketer is aware that he has to be twice as good as the others to be considered for higher honours. The schoolboy cricketer, who rubs shoulders with Test heroes, is seldom bothered about reputations." Sanjay Manjrekar echoes Gavaskar's sentiments: "When you're in a side where two guys have already got double centuries, you don't feel great even if you get a hundred. You've to be run-hungry."

The initiation rites begin early, because in the Dadar-Shivaji Park area a homogeneous middle class Maharashtrian culture prevails, where excellence in cricket is considered as significant as topping a calculus paper. Fathers eagerly take their sons to watch the big match (not a measly Test match, but the Battle of the Roses—Dadar Union versus Shivaji Park Gymkhana) on Sunday mornings, carrying the morning papers with them.

A walk down Hindu Colony in Dadar, or Bhalachandra Road with the King George School on one side and the Ruia College on the other, is enough to make one realise how top class cricketers emerged from these humble surroundings. The lanes in Hindu Colony are small, their width hardly 30-40 feet. Cars are now parked on both sides of the road, in front of an endless row of three-storey structures. The players are no respecters of window-panes but breaking one of them means the batsman concerned is declared out and has to get it replaced. Thus, lofting

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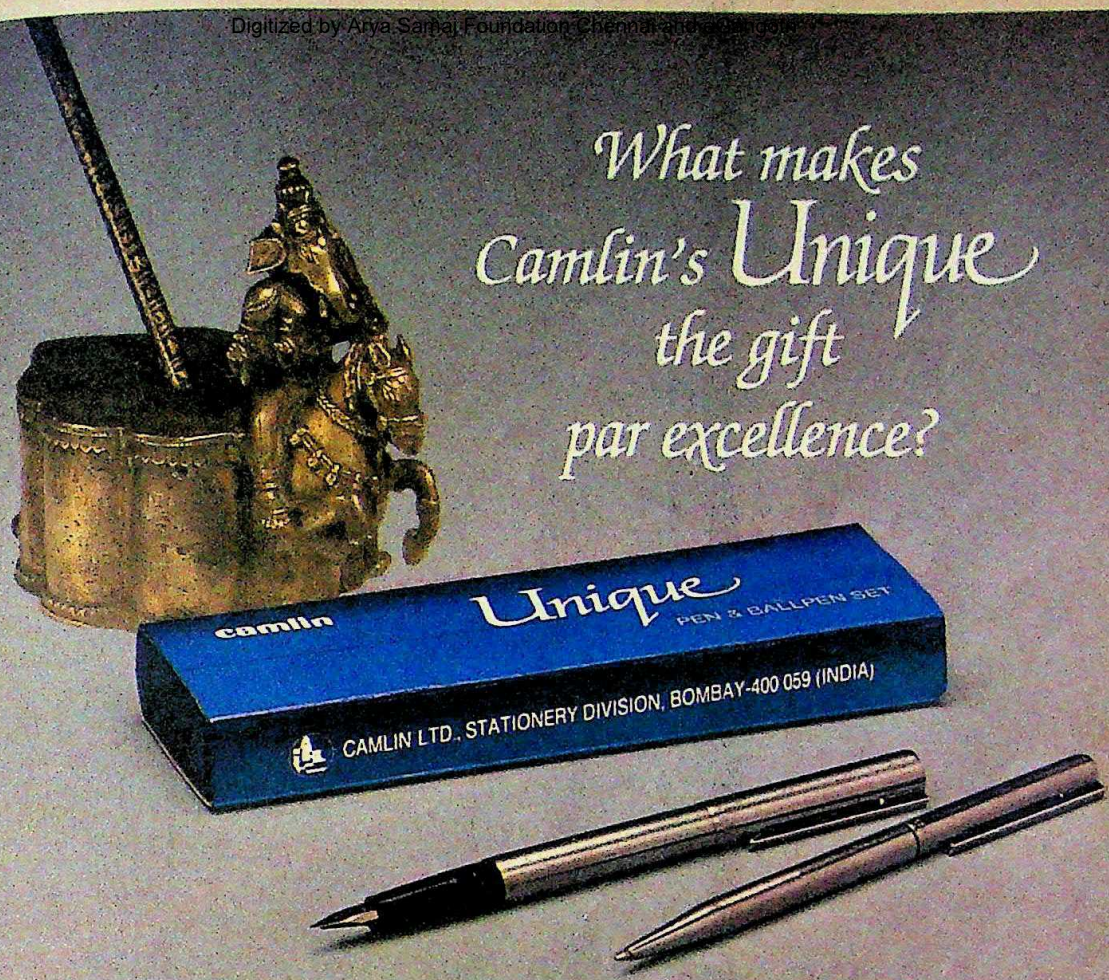

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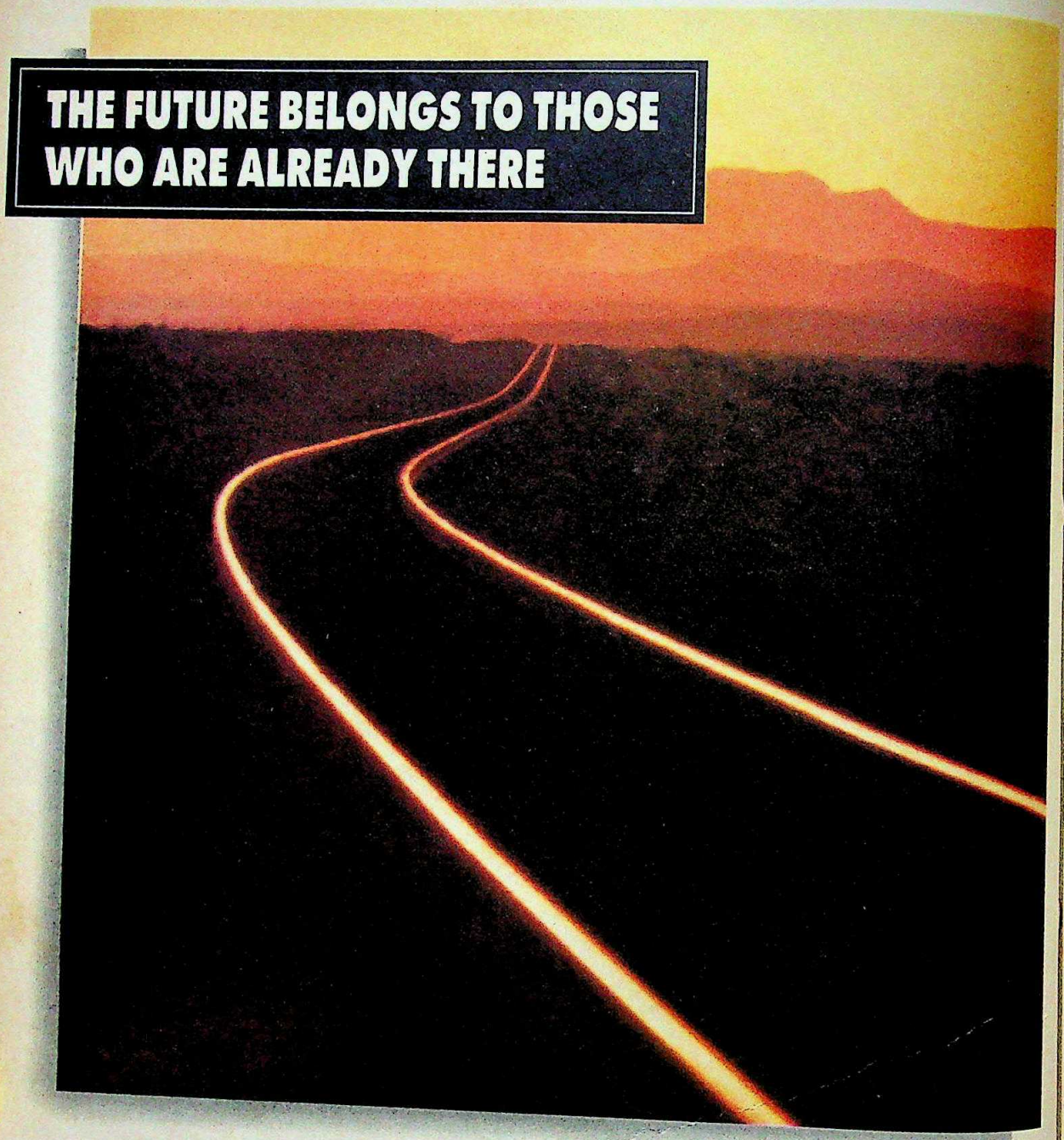

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M. K. Shah
Managing Director

November 25, 1990

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Forward Investments Pvt. Ltd.,
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the ball is the easiest way to get out. Says Ajit Wadekar, former Indian captain, who grew up at Shivaji Park: "It forces you to control your shots. Gavaskar mastered playing in the V (between mid-off and mid-on). He'd have been a different player if he had not played *gali* (street) cricket."

The neighbourhood has spawned Test cricketers ever since cricket was played in India. Gavaskar is indeed its most illustrious product. You walk the streets of Hindu Colony as if it is a walk through the country's cricketing history. Great cricketers are good neighbours too. Over there is Gavaskar's house. Vengsarkar's is hardly two blocks away. The coach, Vasu Paranjpe lives at the end of the road. And then there's Ravi Shastri's house.

GAVASKAR grew up with Sudhir Naik; Milind Rege and Sharad Hazare live within a five-minute walk from his house. As Gavaskar says: "Years later, when all of us were in the Bombay team, it seemed as if Chickalwadi and Shivaji Park were representing Bombay." Or India he could have said.

Milind Rege says they were content merely being in the reserves of Dadar Union for two seasons so that they could rub shoulders with the high and mighty. For it is at clubs and in the tents that a young Tendulkar would pick up tips from Manjrekar that he would remember all his playing days. But Manjrekar could have heard it from Sandeep Patil, who may have picked it up from Vengsarkar, who'd credit it to Wadekar, who'd trace it to Madhav Apte and Polly Umrigar, going as far back as Vijay Merchant.

When Tendulkar was making his Ranji Trophy debut against Gujarat almost two years ago, Vasu Paranjpe went to Gavaskar's house and told him: "You must come to the stadium today and see this boy. You'll be scintillated." An elated Gavaskar gifted Tendulkar his special lightweight pads, since both of them are of short stature, after Tendulkar hit a century in the match. Then in England last summer, Gavaskar advised Tendulkar: "Everything you're doing is fine. But don't go for the ball; let it come to you." Recalls Tendulkar: "I thought about it and followed it in the next innings." It was an innings that gave Tendulkar his first Test century.

Some critics feel it is the Maharashtrian ethos which has produced the run-hungry machines. Mihir Bose writes in *A Maidan View:* "What is this Maharashtrian angst? Why is the Shivaji Park ingredient so crucial? It is wronged nationalism. Somewhat similar to the one felt in Yorkshire but infinitely more powerful. One that believes that the true merits and genius of Maharashtrians have not been acknowledged. Shivaji Park is the symbol of that feeling."

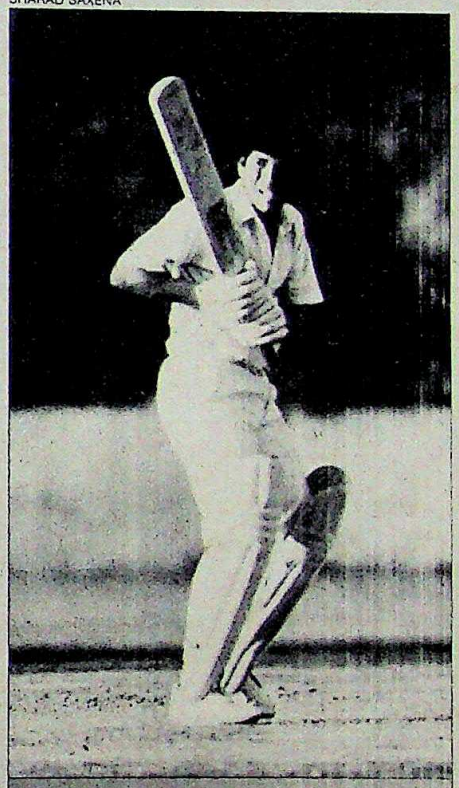
But club loyalties are now waning. The days when Gavaskar would fly back from a tour and turn up the next morning for Dadar Union are gone. Says Sandeep Patil: "Sunil was the only guy who was devoted fully to the game. All of us—including myself—were content to be happy-go-lucky."

But Tendulkar and Manjrekar have proved that despite being overcome by slackness, this nursery continues to nurture talent. The crowd of Shivaji Park teenagers struggling to get into the Indian team shows that the turf still sprouts talent: Vinod Kambli, with a string of centuries for Bombay this season has shown that he's not going to be long in catching up with schoolmate Tendulkar. Other bright cricketers include Sameer Dighe, Samir Talpade and Jatin Paranjpe.

Different sets of heroes continue to emerge from the playing fields of Shivaji Park. Gavaskar taught Indians tenacity, and now hardly any Indian fights shy of facing hard, fast bowling. One day Tendulkar will have left behind his lesson: loose deliveries must be hit with the contempt they deserve. That would be a fitting tribute to the Shivaji Park ground, even if it is filled in the evenings with Shiv Sainiks and Congress(I) workers who've converted the ground into a battleground of political ideologies.

The blades of grass sway not to the rhetoric of the Thackerays and Pawars; but tingle with excitement each time square cuts whistle by.

SHARAD SAXENA

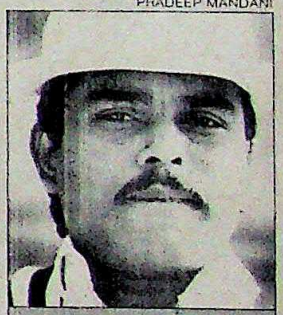


Sachin Tendulkar can transform a match with his scintillating stroke play.

PRADEEP MANDANI

Vinod Kambli, a prolific scorer could soon play for India.

PRADEEP MANDANI



Pravin Amre, now with Rajasthan, was in the Asia Cup squad.

Tendulkar, Kambli and Amre have led a revival of traditional Dadar-Shivaji Park domination of Indian batting.

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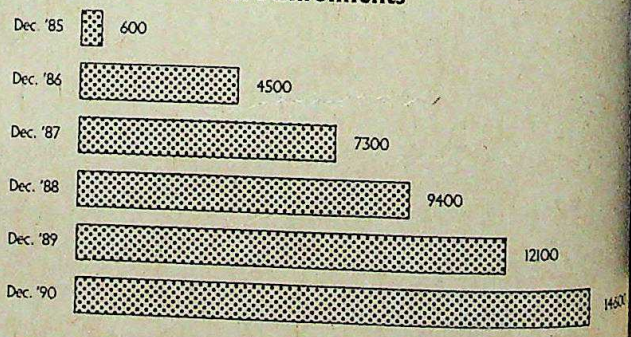

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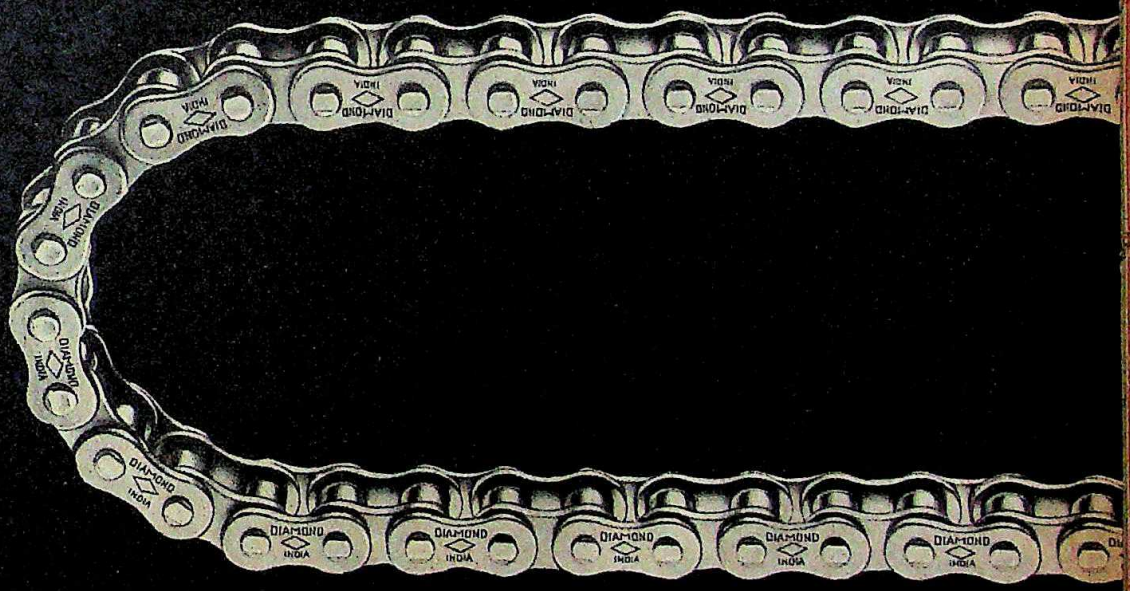

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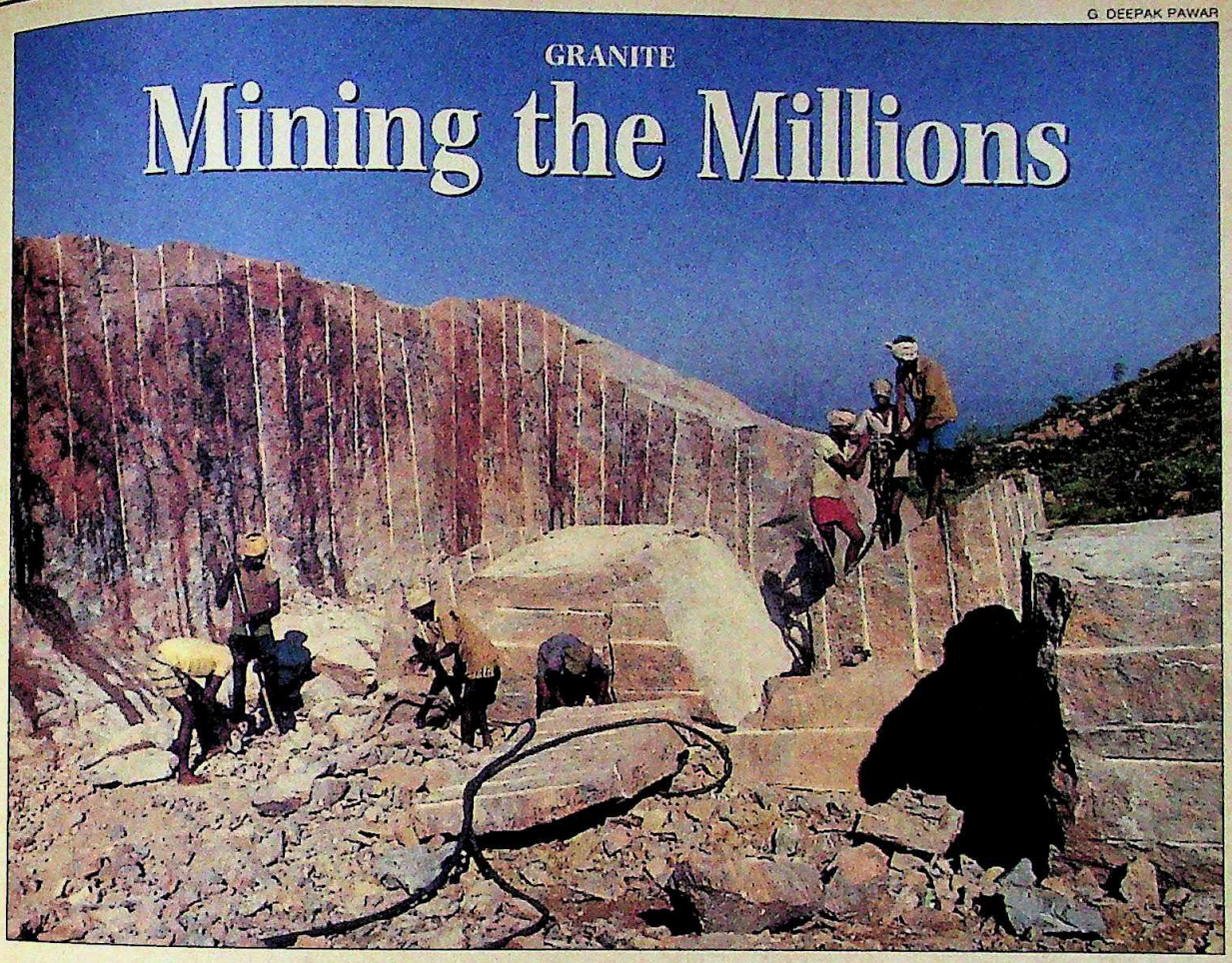

GRANITE

Mining the Millions

Once used mainly for gravestones, granite has found favour as building material. And the gold rush is on in granite quarrying as big business houses move in, short-sighted government policies notwithstanding.

By ANAND VISWANATHAN

WHEN lawyer R. Veeramani decided to give up his lucrative practice at the Madras High Court to return to his native Salem in 1971, many people thought he was nuts. Pooling Rs 60,000 and conscripting his three brothers as partners, he invested the money in granite, at that time uncharted territory for businessmen.

Today, nearly two decades later, Veeramani is back in Madras. Not at the high court, but as the head of Gem Granites, a Rs 36-crore company and top-dog in exports (annual shipment: Rs 35 crore, nearly a quarter of the country's total). Besides owning a processing unit at Injambakkam near Madras, 48-year-old Veeramani runs granite factories in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh—enough to lay claim to the title of granite king.

That title may have other claimants soon. K. Badrinarayanan, who got into granite around 1972 with a seed capital of Rs 2.5 lakh, is already a Rs 20-crore player. With four factories clustered around Chembarambakkam near Madras, Badrinarayanan's company, named Enterprising Enterprises, scored a big hit abroad with his natural granite tiles last year. "We are aiming for Rs 30 crore (turnover) this year," says he.

Veeramani and Badrinarayanan are among the 400-odd granite exporters jostling for ship space in the country today. Their stupendous success has drawn covetous glances from the big 'uns of industry: Voltas, Larsen & Toubro, Britannia Industries, the Singhanias and the Murugappa group among others.

Sure, there's money in them Thar rocks. Granite is no longer the low-value mineral it was. The construction industry in the West woke up to the virtues of granite over two decades ago, as it needed little maintenance. Thus granite slabs, traditionally confined to tombstones, were resurrected for use as building blocks and decorative exteriors.

The money is in value addition. A truck-load of granite as road jelly fetches a piffling Rs 1,000 in the country; when shaped into even blocks and sold abroad, the value rises 15-fold; process and polish them further, and it's Rs 45,000 in the pocket.

That's not the only reason for the gold rush. As it is, India has barely scratched the surface in granite export. For every 100 blocks of granite sold in the Rs 7,500-crore world market, India's share is a meagre two. In 1989-90, the scores of Indian exporters notched up Rs 147 crore in export billings. Plans are afoot to nearly quadruple that to Rs 550 crore by 1995, and double that again by 2000.

All that adds up to enough action for the up-and-comers in the granite

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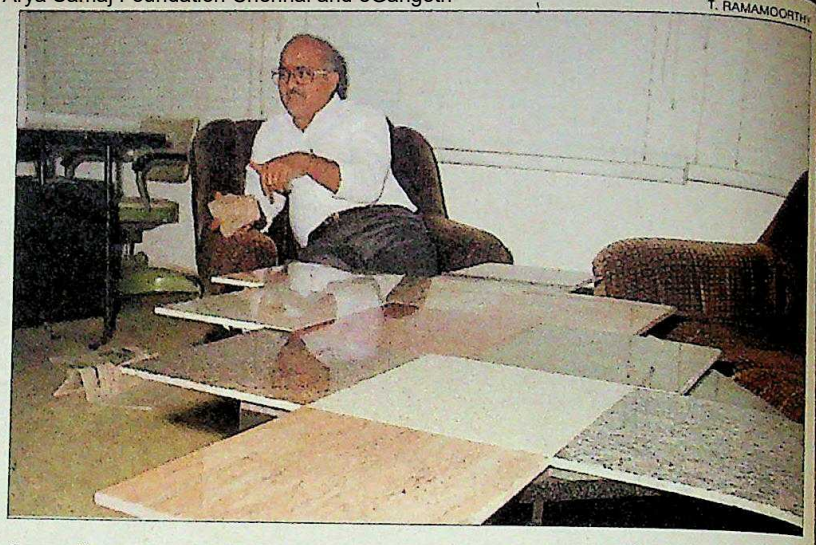
field, but existing players are not sure state governments will play ball. Says Vinay Kumar Poddar, who heads the Rs 3-crore turnover Poddar Granites and is president of the All India Granites & Stone Association: "State government policies are shortsighted."

The states get into the act because granite is classified as a minor mineral under the Mines & Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act of 1957. The Centre merely oversees the development and conservation of minor minerals whereas the states control their exploitation for business. Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have been the major quarrying areas and it is from the south that most of the granite has been exported all these years. Reserves located recently in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra are yet to be tapped.

T. RAMAMOORTHY



With four factories, Badrinarayanan's natural granite tiles were a big hit abroad last year.

K. Badrinarayanan of Enterprising Enterprises

Unfortunately, government policies have been rather amorphous. Karnataka took the lead in 1979 by making black granite a no-go area. Private quarrying was banned and the state-owned Mysore Minerals Ltd was asked to step in. In 1981, the ban was extended to cover the then-popular pink granite and subsequently to all other colours. Thus, once the existing leases expired, business was seriously affected in 1983. When efforts to seek redressal in court failed, the miners turned to patta (non-government) lands. But the Government brought patta lands too under the ban. On appeal, the Karnataka High Court upheld the right of a private owner either to quarry or lease his land to another person.

The Karnataka Government now appears to have softened up, with the

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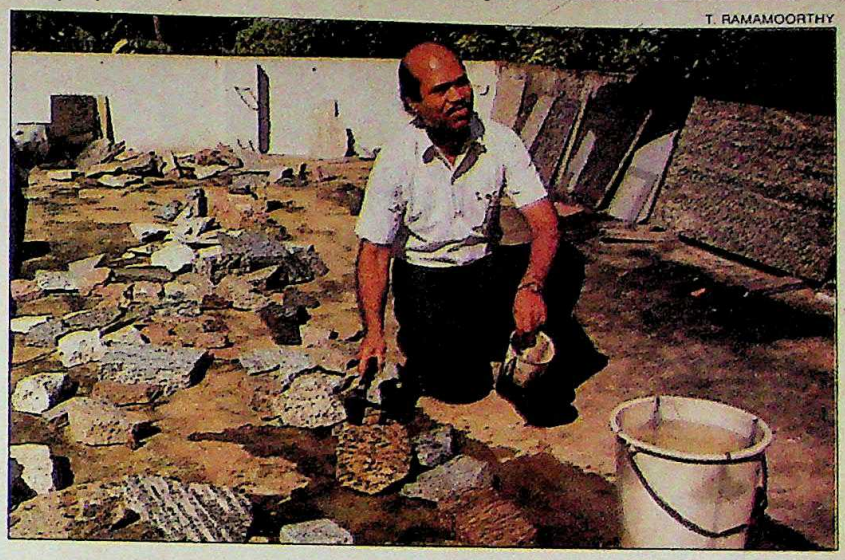
ban off on quarrying all types of granite. New 10-year leases are being granted in place of the earlier five. But its latest order of May 22, 1990, comes with a tough rider attached. Lease-holders cannot start quarrying till they start processing the stones within the state itself. But the appeals haven't fallen on deaf ears. According to a state government spokesman there are plans for a new policy as the earlier one was considered "impractical".

The industry sure has gripes. It is training its guns on the stipulation that an exporter must set up a processing unit in the state within a year of the execution of the sale lease deed, which has threatened the existence of small- and medium-scale miners and exporters selling only rough blocks. Says Y.R. Shah, managing director of Bangalore-based Oriental Select Granites Pvt Ltd: "Imported machinery can cost Rs 3 crore for an (medium-sized) export-oriented unit (EOU). New entrants cannot raise that kind of money."

Tamil Nadu hasn't been any kinder to granite entrepreneurs. The Government has changed its policy 14 times between 1972 and 1989. Till 1989, it banned all quarrying on government land by private miners. Exporters went on a self-imposed exile to quarry granite in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka instead. But with the announcement of a new policy by the DMK Government, they're back. The new policy allows auctioning of quarries on government land. However, the insistence that miners set up a processing unit within two years of obtaining a 10-year lease has left them worried. The only plus point is that they can get their leases renewed

T. RAMAMOORTHY



Madras lawyer Veeramani was the first one to realise granite's potential. He is the top-dog today.

R. Veeramani, founder of Gem Granites

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for another 10 years for a fee that is one-and-a-half times the original rate. (Leases are granted to parties quoting the highest rates in sealed tenders.) The Government has so far netted Rs 20 crore from auctioning quarries in April and October last year.

Andhra Pradesh's policy is different in that it allows quarrying on leased land till processing units are set up within the stipulated two years. While exporters welcome this approach, the growing capital-intensive nature of the business—more so since the Government wants high-value polished stuff rather than just roughs to be exported—is steadily elbowing the little guys out of the business.

T. RAMAMOORTHY

Granite slabs being packaged for dispatch

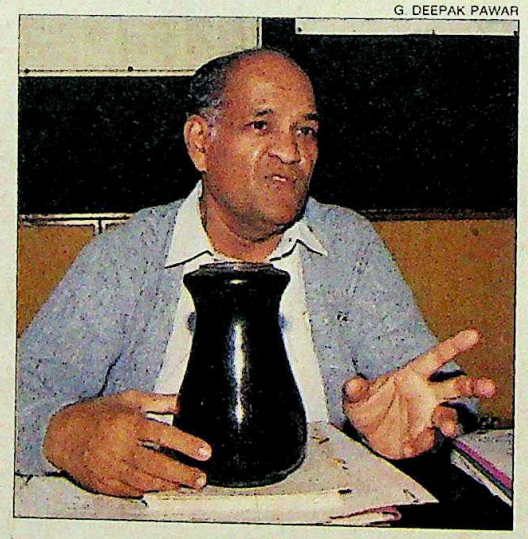
FOR instance the Tata company Voltas, is setting up a 100 per cent EOU for Rs 13 crore at Ranipet, near Madras, called Premium Granites Ltd. Then Larsen & Toubro's Rs 15 crore to Rs 30 crore investment, also planned in Tamil Nadu, should get cracking around 1993. The Rs 750-crore Murugappa group entered the fray in 1988 by setting up a granite division in Coromandel Engineering. A factory at Tada, Andhra Pradesh, already makes tombstones for the export market. A granite tile unit is to come up in Tamil Nadu. The division's current turnover is Rs 3.5 crore, and is revving up. Apart from all this, playback singer Lata Mangeshkar, along with old associate Raj Singh Dungarpur and friends, is planning a Rs 15-crore investment in Tamil Nadu. And in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's son-in-law, A.S. Adhipen Bose, is making hay operating 45 quarries and plotting a new Rs 7 crore, 100 per cent export unit.

That's not all. Besides the traditional tombstones, slabs and tiles, some exporters have also begun to sculpt flower vases, mantelpieces and paperweights out of granite. Last year, two Madras-based entrepreneurs launched Sharon Granites as an export unit to make lanterns from granite. As lanterns are necessary tombstone accessories in Japan, the promoters of Sharon hope to rake in Rs 4 crore from the Japanese by end-1991.

Sure, there are roadblocks facing the fortune-hunters in granite. Short 10-year leases is one of them, since it doesn't give the exporter enough exploitation time after the infrastructure is set up. As S. Rajanikanth of the Bangalore-based Prasad Granites points out, it takes three to five years to get the infrastructure up before the serious quarrying can start. "We are involved in a kind of community development work," adds Rajanikanth. In the US and Japan, leases run upto 99 years; in Italy 30 years.

The hurdles notwithstanding, entrepreneurs are rushing in where logic says they should be wary of treading. In the last four years, the Centre has sanctioned 230 letters of intent for 100 per cent granite EOUs, indicating that the lure of a quick buck endures. Obviously the Centre is interested in the greenbacks that granite bring in.

G. DEEPAK PAWAR



Medium scale operations like Shah's can't raise money for the processing unit as stipulated.

Y.R. Shah Chief of Oriental Select Granites Pvt Ltd

There is already talk that granite may be taken out of the list of minor minerals to prevent state governments from playing ducks and drakes with the industry that lays the golden eggs. But the latter are sure to resist any such encroachment on their turf. Says a piqued Tamil Nadu government spokesman: "We will certainly oppose the move."

Fear of tangling with state governments was one of the reasons for Krishnaprasad Tripuraneni's decision to get into artificial granite. The 33-year-old pioneer in ceramics technology, who hit the big time with his Spartek Ceramics, is hoping for an encore with Spartek Granites, a company floated with the specific purpose of making ceramic tiles with a granite finish for export. Price, says Tripuraneni, is on his side, since artificial granite costs less than half as much as the natural variety (Rs 60-65 vs Rs 150-200 per sq ft for polished granite). Set up as India's first and the world's eighth such unit, Spartek Granites expects an annual turnover of Rs 15 crore to Rs 20 crore when operating at full tilt. Predicts Tripuraneni: "Five years from now, ceramic granite will be the in thing."

Maybe. But if the long queue of natural granite hopefuls is any indication, it is the real thing that is in now.

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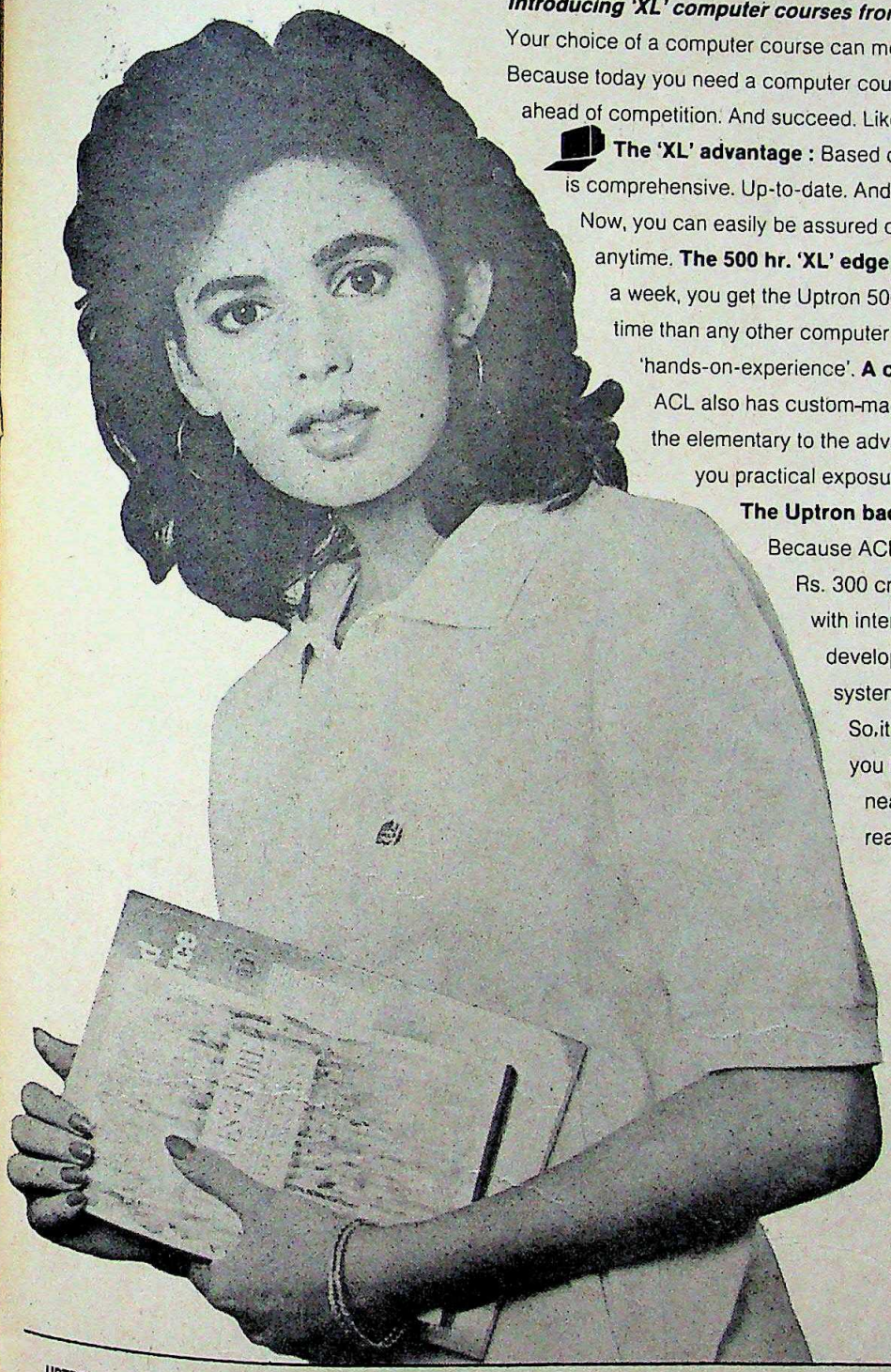

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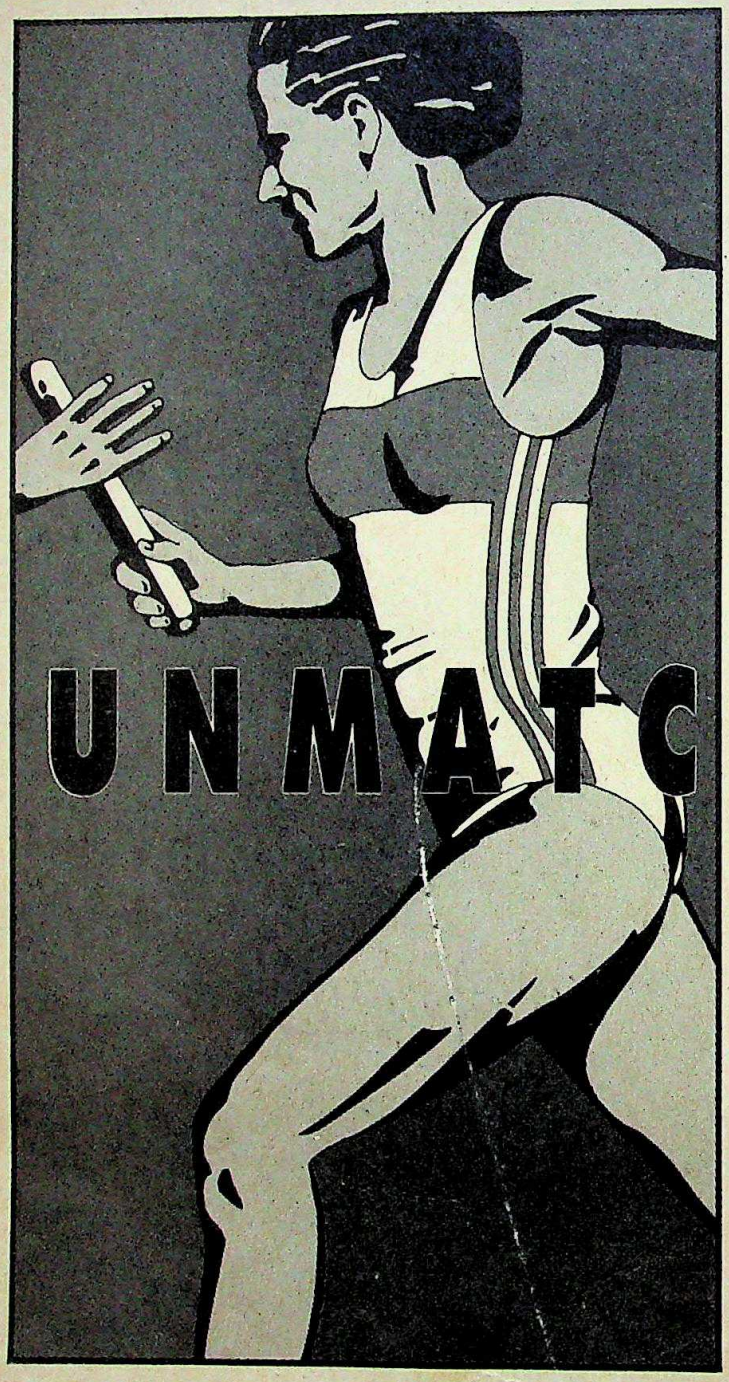

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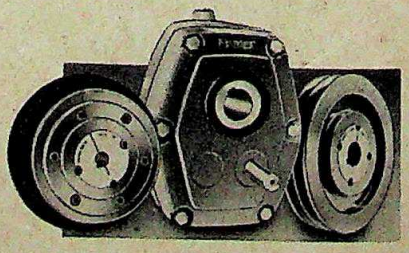

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LANGUISHING LIST

PRIME Minister Chandra Shekhar says a new industrial policy will be announced during the budget session of Parliament. Bureaucrats doubt whether the policy will be very different from the one his predecessor government drew up, not least because there's no full-fledged industry minister working on it. In the absence of one, there's a pile-up of files in the ministry, which have to be painfully carted from Udyog Bhavan to the Prime Minister's Office for approvals. Held up in the bottle-neck are a host of projects and licence applications. Meanwhile, the fate of one particular initiative of the previous industry minister Ajit Singh is worth watching. A few days before the BJP withdrew support to the V.P. Singh government, Singh had finalised the list of industries where foreign investors would be welcome without ifs and buts. This list, formulated after months of dilly-dallying, was ready to be approved by the Cabinet. The Chandra Shekhar Government is not in favour of the idea, but key officials are trying to push it.

GREEN VICTORY

ENVIRONMENTAL activists in Karnataka have reason to celebrate. They have succeeded in closing down Karnataka Pulpwood Limited (KPL), a joint sector enterprise set up by the Ramakrishna Hegde government and the Birla group's Harihar Polyfibres. A movement spearheaded by the Samaj Parivartan Samudaya had opposed the company's plans of growing eucalyptus trees on common village lands. The relentless campaign, which was supported by local legislators, bore fruit recently when KPL's directors recommended that the company's assets be handed over to another state government undertaking, the Karnataka Forest Development Corporation. The green movement in India need not despair. There's hope yet.

LIBERTY FOR USSR

THE Rs 80-crore Liberty Shoes group has grand designs on the Soviet market. It has signed no less than 14 different memoranda of understanding with various organisations in the USSR. The plans include the establishment of a Rs 40-crore joint venture called Eliza in that country to manufacture shoes, shoe-uppers and finished leather. The venture intends producing 3 lakh pairs of shoes by 1995. The group will also be collaborating with the India Tourism Development Corporation to set up a Rs 3-crore Indian restaurant called Karnal. That's not all. Liberty will be setting up a chain of four retail outlets at Gorky city at a cost of Rs 2 crore to sell a range of Indian goods.

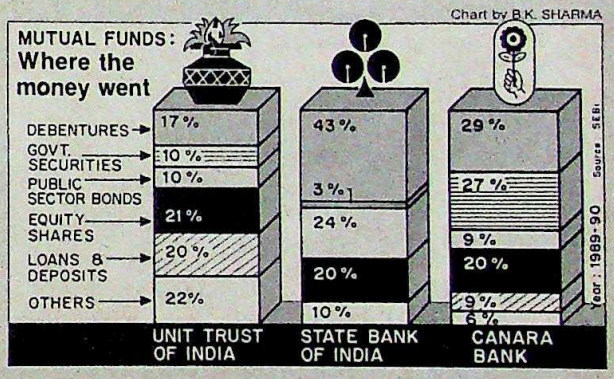
ROARING SALES

MOTORCYCLE manufacturer Enfield India Ltd is overjoyed with the performance of its sole concessionaire for Europe. The firm, Bavanar Products, headed by a bike buff Raja Narayan who used to work as an accountant with the British Government, has managed to sell 1,500 Enfield motorcycles in the highly-competitive European market over the last three years. (Of these, some 800 vehicles have been sold in the UK alone). Narayan has convinced 150 dealers to stock and sell Enfield bikes. Further, he sold 7,200 engine units to a Portuguese firm last year. The relatively lower price of Indian motorcycles has undoubtedly assisted Narayan's marketing efforts. A 500 cc Bullet Indian bike is priced at around £1,800 in Britain against £2,800 for a comparable Japanese one.

NOT SHARE CRAZY

MUTUAL funds raised about Rs 6,500 crore from the country's capital markets in 1989 and the amount raised last year is expected to be higher. The misconception that the bulk of this money was invested in the secondary market for equity shares seems to have been

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



largely responsible for the runaway rise in stock prices during the second and third quarters of 1990. The truth is quite different. Statistics compiled by the Securities and Exchange Board of India show that the three largest mutual funds invested barely 20 per cent of funds raised in equities during 1989-90 (*see chart*). A smallish Rs 1,300 crore—the proverbial drop in the ocean. The country's total market capitalisation is around 50 times that.

MAKING A MARK

THE Rs 65-crore Mesco group of companies headed by Rita Singh has made a mark by setting up 12 units in the country manufacturing leather goods and pharmaceuticals, besides two tanneries in Zambia and the Soviet Union. Over 95 per cent of the group's turnover comes from exports. Singh is trying to expand and diversify fast by setting up new bulk drugs and fine chemicals plant at Hapur (Uttar Pradesh) costing Rs 18 crore. Moreover, two new companies have been floated to enter the hotel and air-taxi businesses. Mesco Hotels intends building two-star and three-star hotels in Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka while Mesco Airlines plans to buy two second-hand Soviet helicopters for Rs 30 crore to operate cargo and passenger services. It doesn't seem that the company will face major cash problems to back its new projects. For the group turnover is slated to cross Rs 100 crore during the current year and gross profits should exceed Rs 16 crore.

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INDIAN INDUSTRY

Way Below Par

Goods cannot compete in foreign market

▶ WHEN the Bombay-based Godrej Soaps cast a roving eye on the vast export market, it came to a gloomy conclusion. Its soaps would have been a wash-out in the marketplace. For one simple reason: the cost of its main raw materials—oils and fats—was three times higher than what its competitors abroad were paying.

▶ Automobile giant Mahindra and Mahindra might be one of the big boys at home, but out there in the big, bad world, it's a mere toddler. The company has a capacity to produce barely 10,000 lightweight trucks annually when no Japanese competitor would be comfortable with anything less than eight times that amount.

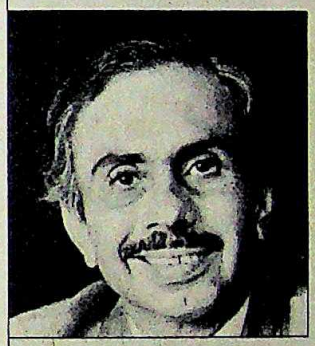
▶ Steelmaker Mukand Ltd sure has cheaper labour than its international rivals. But that doesn't help its export effort much. For when cheap labour comes tied with low productivity—Mukand produces 225 tonnes of steel per man-year when its peers abroad manage at least four times as much—the result is higher cost.

GODREJ, Mahindra and Mukand aren't the only ones finding the international market tough to crack. And for more reasons than mentioned above. Cocooned behind the protective walls of high import duties and non-tariff barriers that almost eliminate the icy chill of competition, few manufacturers contemplated selling beyond home shores in the past. Even as the Government was legislating a high-cost economy, industry was happy enough plying the domestic market with shoddy products. Now that competition is knocking at the door, few Indian companies are up to it. Admits Keshub Mahindra, chairman of Mahindra and Mahindra: "The Indian industrial environment has not been suited to international competition. We are way behind in the global market."

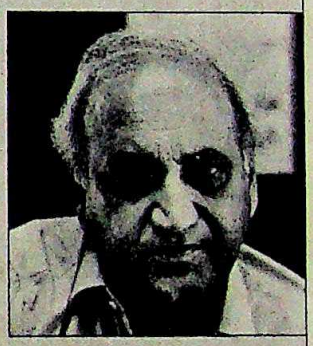
If confirmation of the fact is needed, it comes from the Geneva-based World Economic Forum, an autonomous international body. The forum's *World Competitiveness Report 1990* dumps India at the bottom of the heap among emerging developing world competitors, much below countries like Thailand, Indonesia and even Mexico (*see charts*). Of the 10 parameters selected for deciding competitiveness, India hugs the bottom in two (human resources and international orientation), and is only marginally better off than the lowest rankers in six others (among them: industrial efficiency, market orientation).

That's bad news all right. But half a decade of liberalisation, ministerial threats to big industrial houses and, above all, a depreciating rupee, have opened a window to the world outside. So Ceat Tyres is a big exporter (1989-90 exports: Rs 24 crore) though returns on sales are a meagre 1 per

Adi Godrej (left); Keshub Mahindra



"Export products like garments, where we have an edge, were not open to us."



"Indian industrial environment has not been suited to foreign competition."

INDIA'S COMPETITIVENESS SCOREBOARD: BOTTOM OF THE LADDER*

RANK	ECONOMIC DYNAMISM	INDUSTRIAL EFFICIENCY	MARKET ORIENTATION	FINANCIAL DYNAMISM	HUMAN RESOURCES	EXTERNAL ORIENTATION	FUTURE ORIENTATION	POLITICAL STABILITY
1.	Taiwan	Singapore	Hongkong	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore	Taiwan	Singapore
2.	S. Korea	Thailand	Singapore	Hongkong	Taiwan	Hongkong	Singapore	Hongkong
3.	Singapore	Hongkong	Taiwan	Taiwan	S. Korea	Taiwan	S. Korea	Malaysia
4.	Hongkong	Taiwan	Malaysia	S. Korea	Hongkong	Thailand	**INDIA**	Taiwan
5.	Malaysia	Malaysia	S. Korea	Thailand	Malaysia	S. Korea	Thailand	Thailand
6.	**INDIA**	S. Korea	Brazil	Indonesia	Thailand	Malaysia	Malaysia	S. Korea
7.	Thailand	Indonesia	Thailand	Malaysia	Brazil	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico
8.	Indonesia	Mexico	**INDIA**	**INDIA**	Mexico	Brazil	Hongkong	Indonesia
9.	Brazil	**INDIA**	Indonesia	Mexico	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	**INDIA**
10.	Mexico	Brazil	Mexico	Brazil	**INDIA**	**INDIA**	Brazil	Brazil

*Source: The World Competitiveness Report 90 *Performance compared with other newly industrialised countries

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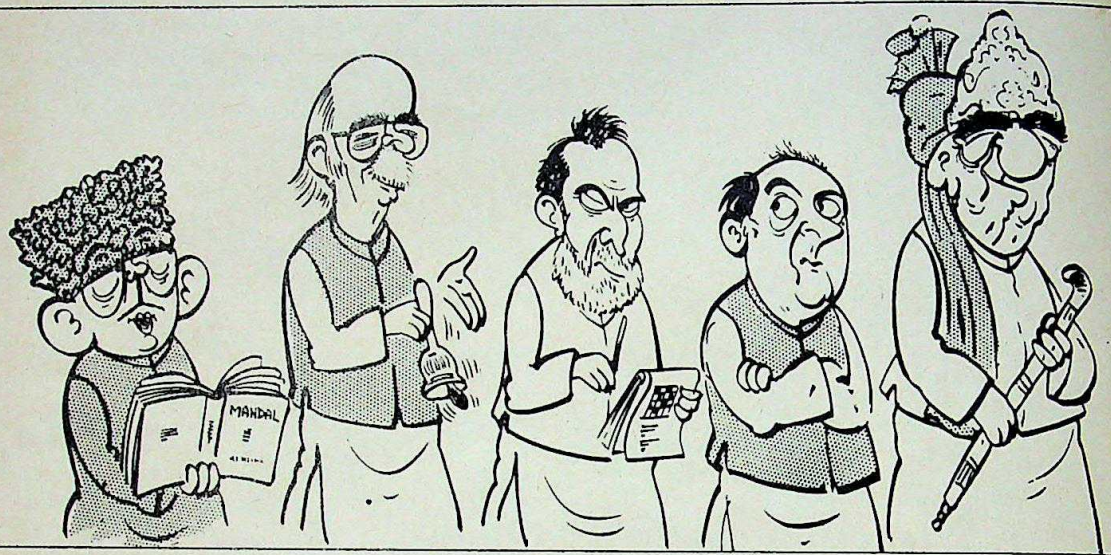
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES ANNUAL CARTOON CONTEST 1991



THEME

* *Cartoon*
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Prominent Indian/Foreign Personalities.

DEADLINE

Sunday, March 10, 1991

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1. The contest is open to amateur, non-professional Indian cartoonists above the age of 18 years. (Those who earn a living from cartooning are not eligible. Please attach a signed declaration that you are not a professional cartoonist.)
2. All works must be original and unpublished.
3. SIZE:
   Cartoon — 25x30 cm. Caricature — 30x45 cm. You can draw either in a horizontal or in a vertical format as suits you. Size must be followed strictly.
4. Each entrant should indicate name, age, address, occupation, telephone number (if any) on the reverse side, in BLOCK LETTERS.
5. Each contestant may take part in either category or both, but submit no more than THREE entries in EACH category. All caricatures should be identified on the reverse side.
6. All prize-winning entries will become the property of The Hindustan Times. The Hindustan Times reserves the right to reproduce the award-winning cartoons in newspapers and magazines published by the HT Group. No requests for returning the drawings, prize-winning, or otherwise, will be entertained.
7. All entries should be on white drawing paper and in black, waterproof ink. All drawings should be neat and clean. No drawings in colour will qualify.
8. The decision of the jury will be final and irrevocable.
9. The result of the contest will be published in The Hindustan Times dated April 14, 1991 (Dak editions: April 15)

JURY: *CHAIRMAN—Shri M F Husain*
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cent in the overseas market (versus 8 per cent at home).

But then tyres are an exception. The recent big successes have all been in traditional areas like textiles, gems and jewellery, and leather, where India has all the comparative advantages: cheap cotton, cheap skilled labour, and adequate supplies of raw hides and skins. Even so, the high-cost syndrome continues to throttle. One instance: the domestic price of polyester fibre used for making cloth is nearly three times higher than world levels. Laments Hrishikesh Mafatlal, vice-chairman and managing director of Mafatlal Fine Spinning and Manufacturing Company, one of the country's top textile exporters: "The cost of textile machinery is as much as 25 per cent higher than in Europe due to the high customs duty. So how can we even hope to be competitive?"

Good question. But the chain continues: it's much costlier to set up a fibre plant in India. One estimate puts the investment in a polyester fibre plant at least 45 per cent higher than a comparable one in the US. Even in a basic industry like steel, the investment cost per tonne of capacity is nearly twice as much in India.

The Government's 'Think small' slogan has contributed to accentuating India's laggard status. With the small-scale sector being encouraged and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act acting as a brake on growth, economies of scale were farthest from the Government's mind till recently. Observes D.R. Pendse, economic advisor to Tata Industries Ltd: "With the Government giving a 15 per cent price preference to (purchases from) the small-scale sector, it was actually helping perpetuate companies which were not competitive."

The policy ambience isn't too conducive to paring costs either. In industries like power and fertiliser, for example, what draws the private sector in is not competitive advantage but assured returns. Says Pradip Shah, managing director of The Credit Rating Information Services of India Ltd: "The private sector power plants have been assured a 15 per cent return on capital. Fertiliser units also get assured returns on investment. So where is the incentive for them to reduce costs at all? How can they become competitive?"

THE good news is that the liberalisation of licensing has brought in new players on earlier protected turf. But this does not always translate into greater international clout. Reason: if easy entry is not accompanied by the right to easy exit, sick units never die and competitive units cannot consolidate. Says Harsh Goenka, chairman of RPG Enterprises, which has tyre company Ceat in its fold: "Due to easy licensing policies, today we have as many as 10 major tyre companies, each with small manufacturing capacities which are not adequate for competing in the export market. We should not have more than three tyre companies."

In some areas, however, the market is still too small to upscale plants to economic size. Mukand's 300,000 tonnes per annum capacity plant for manufacturing special steels is less than half of what it would be in Europe. Says Rajesh Shah, executive director of Mukand: "As the internal markets are not very large, any investment to increase plant size to get economies of scale is not justifiable at all."

It's a vicious circle of sorts. For high costs restrict market size even as small market size restricts investment in higher capacities. The circle can only be broken by sustained government policies to cut costs all around. Wrong policies apart, the Government has a more direct hand in making Indian industry high-cost. Arbitrary hikes in the administered prices of crucial raw materials like steel and coal—both manufactured largely in the public sector—make them costlier than elsewhere. Siemens finds that its transformers—which consume a lot of steel—cost 20 per cent more than those manufactured by its sister concerns in Europe primarily because steel is nearly twice as costly in India.

Costs have been horrendous not only because the Government decrees so, but because of the command structure of the economy as well. Everything requires a permit, and big industry requires more of them. A Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) study of 142 private sector projects says that delays in clearances led to cost overruns of a whopping Rs 17,160 crore in the seventh plan period (1985-90).

Adi Godrej, managing director of Godrej Soaps, suggests that if big industrial houses have not delivered on the export front, it's only because the Government was beeping different signals in the past. Observes he: "Big houses were told to go in for import substitution industries from the beginning. What's more, the main exportable products like garments, where we

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

WHY INDIAN EXPORTERS CANNOT SCORE

	RANKING ON *EXPORT FLEXIBILITY	RANKING ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY	RANKING ON PRODUCT QUALITY
SINGAPORE	4	1	1
HONG KONG	1	6	2
TAIWAN	2	2	6
THAILAND	3	4	4
SOUTH KOREA	5	5	5
MALAYSIA	6	N.A.	3
MEXICO	7	3	8
INDONESIA	8	7	9
BRAZIL	9	8	7
INDIA	10	9	10

* Extent to which producers are prepared to modify products to suit foreign markets.

Source: World Competitiveness Report, 1990

World Economic Forum's report dumps India at the bottom among developing world competitors.

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have a competitive advantage, were not open to us (they are reserved for the small sector). So how do we export?" Adds a senior banker: "The industrial policy statement (of 1956) did not make any reference to foreign markets. No one was concerned about the latest technology as that would mean an outflow of foreign exchange."

Government policy-makers do not take all the criticism lying down. Says a senior official in the Industry Ministry: "We are on the right track. After Independence, self-sufficiency was essential to nurture a fragile democracy. In the next stage, the liberalisation process has led to internal competition. We have to tread cautiously to the next step—to bring into the country international competition without destroying domestic industry."

One consequence of this slowly, slowly approach is that the technology gap between Indian and foreign companies is widening. So Carona Ltd—which manufactures shoes—is still using a plant whose technology is 37 years too old. Its tie-up with Puma to make sports shoes, however, uses more contemporary know now. A FICCI estimate puts the technology gap between Indian and European companies at 15 years in cement and more than 20 years in paper.

For bridging the gulf, one change that may have to precede further liberalisation is labour law reform. It is virtually impossible to retrench workers in India even in the name of modernisation and technology upgradation. Says S.K. Birla, chairman of woollen textile maker VXL Ltd: "It is really a myth that we have a cheap labour force. Our productivity is nowhere near world standards."

To be sure, the macro signals are all towards greater export competitiveness. Not only are export profits tax-free, but there's also more of it, given the depreciation of the rupee. The rupee lost 30 per cent of its value vis-a-vis the dollar over the past five years (1986-90). For starters, however, the incentives have only helped companies to export more of the old products. So while Tata Steel exported Rs 147-crore worth of goods in 1989-90, nearly 40 per cent of it comprised the inevitable shrimps, coffee, pepper or minerals like chrome. And nearly one-third of Hindustan Lever's exports in 1989 did not go to hard currency areas.

In a fundamental sense, thus, India has miles to go before it can achieve export nirvana.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA in Bombay

BUSINESSPEAK

MANMOHAN SINGH

"The budget was too soft"

IT'S easy to lose count of the number of key positions that Manmohan Singh, 58, has held over the last two decades. He has not only served as the Government's chief economic adviser, but as finance secretary, governor of the Reserve Bank of India and deputy chairman of the Planning Commission. He returned to the country last year after a two-year stint as secretary-general of the Geneva-based South Commission. Last fortnight he spoke to Principal Correspondent PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA*—speaking for the first time after his appointment as adviser to the prime minister on economic affairs.*

THERE is no doubt that we are going through a difficult economic situation. The priorities of the Government are to contain the fiscal deficit and manage the balance of payments in an orderly manner. Over the last three years, timely adjustment measures were not taken to tackle the fiscal imbalance. The 1990-91 budget proposals were too soft. Though the Gulf crisis has aggravated the balance of payments position, the external deficit had been building up over a period of time. And the high internal deficit has been spilling over to the external side.

The total deficit—both internal and external—is now running at around 8.5 per cent of the gross national product (GNP). With the recently-announced taxation measures, this proportion should come down to 8.2 per cent by the end of March. The endeavour is to reduce this figure to 6.5 per cent by the end of the next fiscal year.

India is not well-endowed with natural resources and there is a limit to which imports can be squeezed. Thus we have to push exports more vigorously. The exchange rate policies being pursued have sent the right kinds of signals to exporters but we must provide more incentives to them to ensure that exports can be planned on a long-term basis. Since exports comprise only 6 per cent of the country's GNP, it cannot provide the entire stimulus for economic growth. Still, there is no doubt that exports have to grow much faster than GNP—I speak in terms of a minimum volume growth of 10 per cent per year—if the trade deficit is to be managed.

We can't plan for big cuts in government expenditure right away. Fertiliser subsidies can be reduced without hurting agricultural production. One way could be to increase fertiliser prices and adjust these with higher procurement prices. Schemes should be developed to ensure that fertiliser subsidies go to small and marginal farmers.

As for the public sector, my view is that undertakings which can't be made viable should be closed down or sold to the private sector. But large-scale privatisation doesn't take place in a political vacuum. A political consensus for privatisation doesn't exist. The real challenge is to convince trade unions about the need for restructuring the public sector and to make sure workers don't suffer when an unviable unit is closed down.

However, in the short run, our margin for manoeuvrability is limited. And the attempts to correct the fiscal balance will hurt some sections. A credit squeeze is an inescapable part of the efforts to contain monetary expansion. The need to curb the demand for petroleum products and imports will bring about a deceleration in the growth rates of certain industries. All this is unavoidable. Still, the corrections we are now undertaking will bear results by the end of 1991.

The good news is the performance of the agricultural sector. Higher farm incomes will enhance purchasing power in the rural areas and this will, to some extent, neutralise the adverse consequences of the high internal and external deficit. Despite the problems we are currently facing, the underlying health of the Indian economy is not all that bad.

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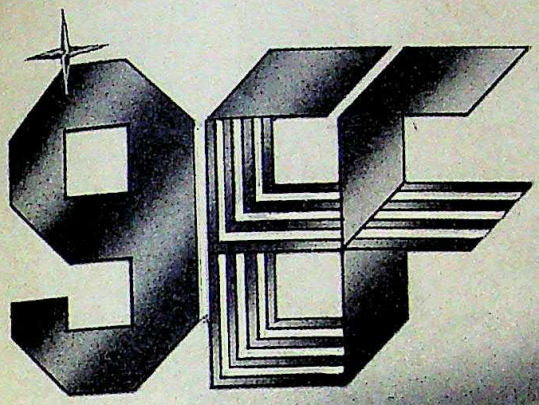

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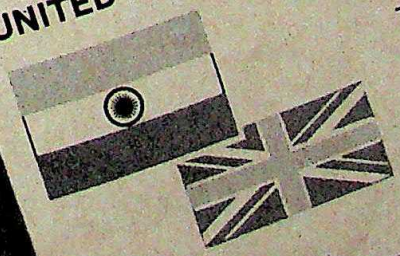

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INDO-SOVIET TRADE

Confused Signals

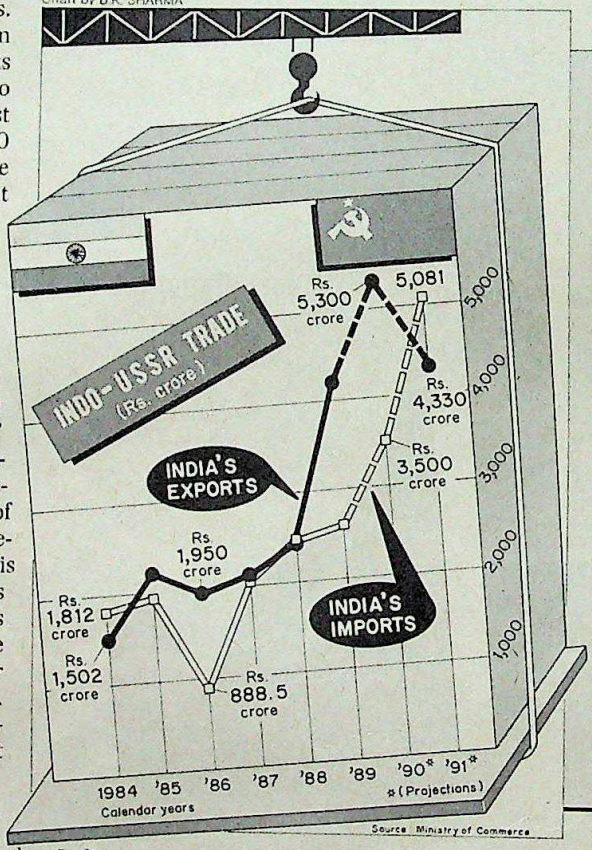
Indian exports face an uncertain future

THE multi-crore question: will the Soviet Union, in its rush towards a market economy, slow down its preferential rupee trade with India? On the face of it, the 1991 Indo-Soviet trade plan gives cause for unease. The Rs 9,411-crore turnover target, after accounting for the rupee's depreciation and inflation, turns out to be an actual fall in real terms. While the plan calls for an increase in India's imports from the Soviet Union to Rs 4,330 crore over last year's targets of Rs 3,500 crore, Indian exports are actually pegged lower at Rs 5,081 crore against Rs 5,300 crore initially planned for 1990.

Exporters' brows are already furrowed. "Some 100 export houses are totally dependent on the rupee trade with the Soviet Union," warns S.P. Agarwal, president of the Delhi Exporters Association. "Some of them are already hit because the Soviet Union is not placing large orders for items like shoe uppers and leather goods as there is no money to pay for such products," he adds. Manubhai Shah, president of the Indo-Soviet Chamber of Commerce, does not think the payment delays are anything serious, but admits that Indian exporters are finding it "increasingly difficult to identify whom to export their goods to in the Soviet Union. Some of the 2,000 Soviet foreign trade organisations are either extinct or in the throes of change".

But look away from the micro hassles and the quiet reality is that the two countries have agreed to maintain the rupee trade in its existing form until 1995 even as the Soviet Union has halted similar trade with its Comecon friends from January 1991. That means, blips and all, the Soviet Union will continue to offer India a market for its second-best manufactured items, which form an estimated 30 to 40 per cent of total exports to the Soviet Union. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, commerce secretary, asserts that Indian entrepreneurs are perfectly capable of "responding to the challenge by being one step ahead of change", but Indian exporters themselves tend to take the gloomy view. Says one: "It will be impossible for us to sell these goods in the international market."

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

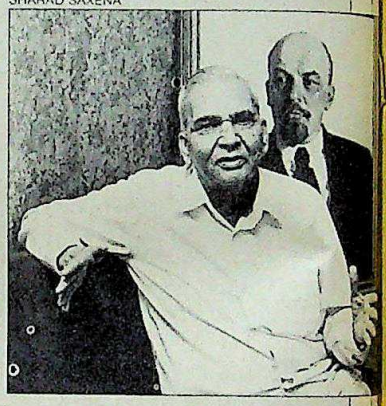


Some economists doubt the utility of rupee trade. Writing in *The Economic Times*, Soviet expert Bibek Debroy, professor at the Delhi-based Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, maintains that since 1985 India's terms of trade have deteriorated with the Soviet Union. Reason: the import basket of fertilisers, crude petroleum and newsprint is costlier when it comes with a Soviet price-tag. But talk of disrupting the cosy trade relationship in the Soviet Union's alleged rush towards free markets continues to disturb traders and policy-makers alike. This is partly because the Soviet Union is currently rushing towards chaos, not free trade.

The transition from a command to a market economy, extremely painful and difficult at the best of times, is taking place within a disintegrating political system in which Moscow finds it increasingly difficult to enforce its writ in several Soviet republics. It is one thing to want efficient markets; it is quite another to create them. The breakdown of all distribution systems within the Soviet Union is evident from the fact that the country faces food shortages in a year of record harvest. Managed trade provides a measure of stability to the supply situation in a country that's also facing a severe shortage of foreign exchange reserves. This explains the caution of Alexandre E. Granovski, economic counsellor in the Soviet Embassy in Delhi. Says he: "The shift to hard currency in the long run is inevitable. But the longer the run the better."

In India, the Soviet Union finds a market for the sort of stuff it can not sell to the more sophisticated markets of the world—like its over designed heavy machinery, for instance. At the same time, the Soviets also need India's below-world-standard supplies—of soaps and toiletries, detergent powder, household goods, electronics and computer equipment, colour picture tubes and leather goods.

SHARAD SAXENA



"Indian exporters are finding it difficult to identify whom to export to in the Soviet Union."

MANUBHAI SHAH
President, Indo-Soviet Chamber of Commerce

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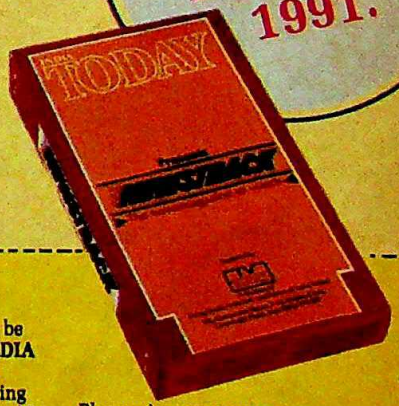

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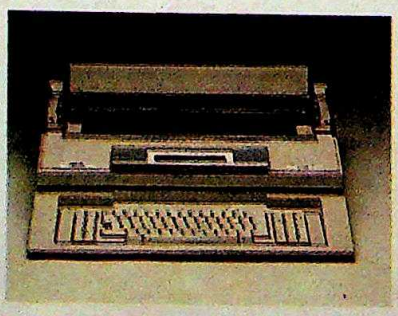

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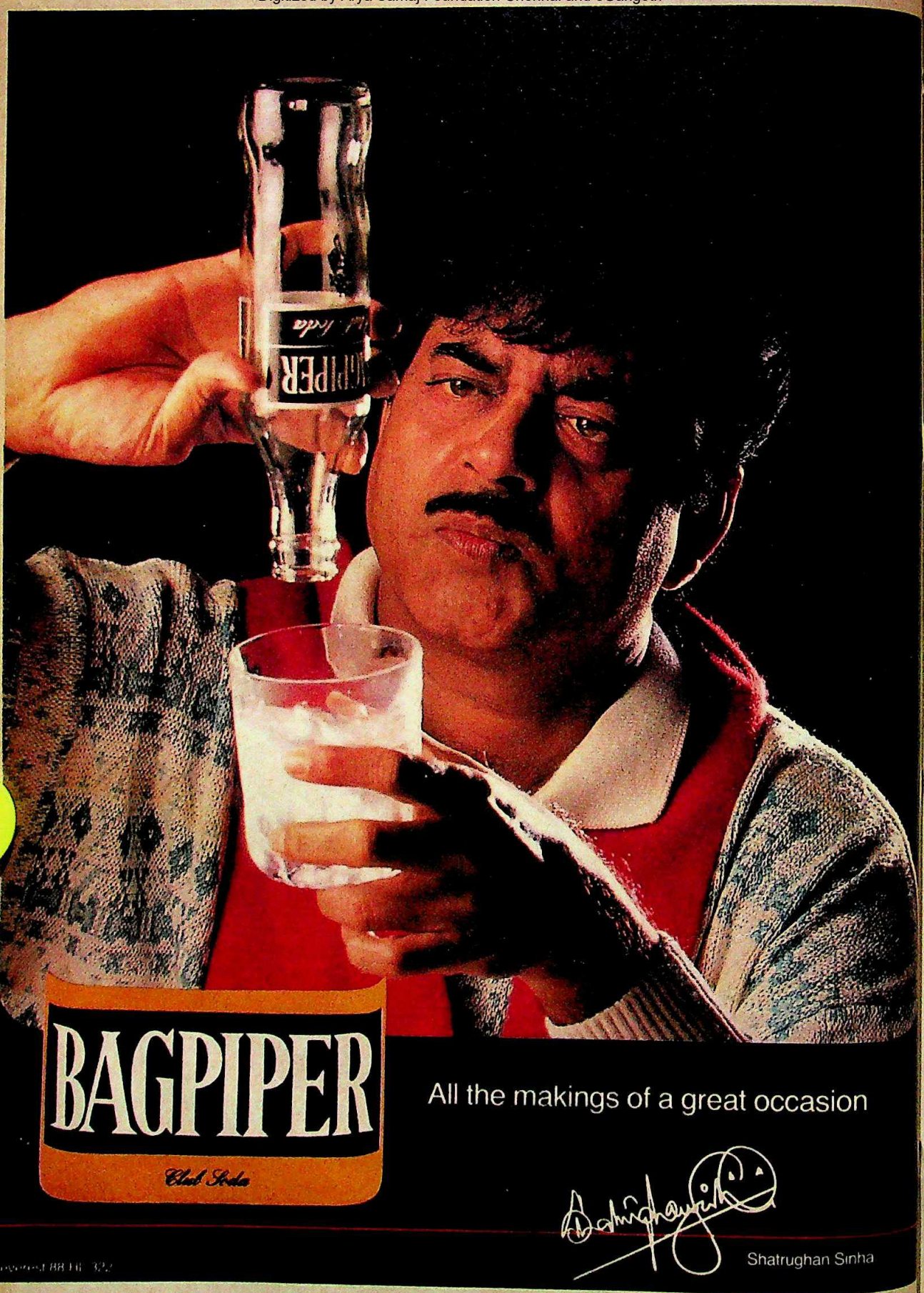

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Granovski points out that the volumes of such goods traded by both sides are "roughly equal".

For the first time ever, the Soviet Union has run into arrears on trade payments. A study by the International Monetary Fund says the country owes $55.2 billion abroad, putting it among the world's top debtors. Its foreign exchange reserves are as low as $5.1 billion, and it can no longer service its foreign debts. It is in no condition thus to abandon rupee trade and rush with its shopping list to the western markets.

Even if it could afford to, Soviet officials assert that they would still buy India's tea, (the Soviet Union purchased some 1,25,000 tonnes of tea from India last year), coffee, cashew and drugs as these are of international quality.

The main hint of change in the air pertains to the rupee-rouble rate, which now works against India's interests. Currently, credits designated in rouble are repaid in the form of instalments at the going exchange rate. Since this rate is linked to a basket of currencies, whenever the rupee depreciates against hard currencies, it also depreciates against the rouble. India protests that this is unfair since the arrangement reflects the weakness of the rupee and not of the rouble. Against the official rate of Rs 22.75 to the rouble, the black market values the Russian currency at less than a tenth that rate: Rs 2 or thereabouts.

Negotiations are on for a more pragmatic alignment, and if a new, more realistic rate is agreed upon, the rupee will be puffed up. By implication, this means that India will have to export much less by way of repayment. But the flip side of the coin is that the Soviet Union may demand hard currency payment for arms.

All in all, although the Soviet Union's political commitment to trade with India may weaken with time, the chaos within the country will certainly impede its progress towards freer markets and less managed trade. As V.N. Kaul, joint secretary of the Ministry of Commerce stresses: "While the Soviet economy is changing very fast, instead of overreacting, we should plan keeping our long term objectives in mind." And veterans like Shah assert that "for the present there is no problem", but if the internal turmoil bubbles over into civil war, then "anything is possible". Until then, nothing is impossible for Indian traders.

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

RURAL WINDOW BY MURAD ALI BAIG

Deviant Development

GHANTALI is the centre of a cluster of Bhil villages, in a forested block of Banswara District in south Rajasthan, bordering Madhya Pradesh. The clear, gurgling waters of a tributary of the Mahi river threads its way through the low hills. The tribals live in sturdy mud houses, large enough to shelter their most valuable asset—their cattle.

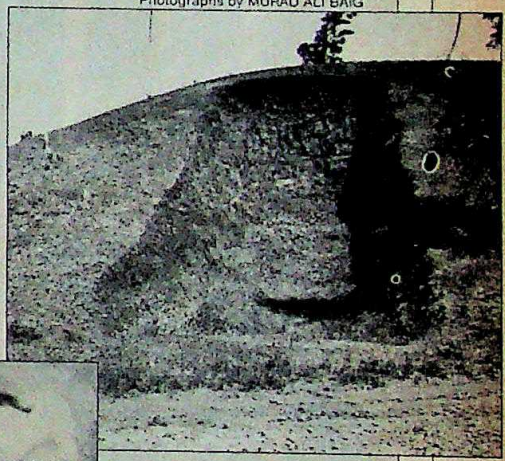
While every past government has proclaimed its commitment to tribal upliftment, the officials supposed to implement the policies have stripped the forests, exploited the locals and only enriched themselves. There is a dazzling multitude of different agencies for development: the Tribal Area Development, District Rural Development Agency, National Rural Employment Programme, Integrated Rural Development Programme, and many others dealing with health, education, irrigation, forests. However, the biggest spender has been the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (JRY).

According to Maliya, who works part time for Large Multi-Purpose Agricultural Society: "Last year, thousands of open wells were sanctioned with a budget of Rs 17,000 for each one. Thirty per cent was siphoned off for the supervisors and above, Rs 6,000 went to the blasting contractors. Half the labour on the 'muster rolls' were *farzi* (fake names). Finally there was barely Rs 2,000 left for actual labour. Most of the wells were, therefore, abandoned incomplete—ending up as dangerous traps for our cattle. These *kangressi khaddas* (Congress ditches)!"

The JRY has left the district littered with school buildings without roofs, roads to nowhere, withered saplings and scars in the ground which are recorded as small dams. The sanctioned Rs 2 lakh was inadequate for the cement and masonry needed for completion.

The Government had been an ardent advocate for increasing the minimum wages from Rs 14 a day to Rs 22. This was not out of humanitarian considerations but to ensure that there was more to share. The workers almost never get the new or old minimum wages, because a piece-rate system is used to confuse the workers. The payment is made according to a measurement book and calculated on work completed. The consequent payment is always less than the prescribed rates.

Photographs by MURAD ALI BAIG



An incomplete well; and (inset) Maliya

The huge investments in health and education would have been laudable if only the doctors, compounders, and teachers could be persuaded to live and work in such a backward area. The secondary school at Ghantali has a sanctioned strength of 16 teachers but only six are actually available. It is not, therefore, surprising that few of the 350 students take their studies seriously. The fate of the 25 primary schools and the dozen primary health centres is even worse. All the notified posts have been quickly filled but the appointees spend their time, influence and money trying for postings near the bigger towns. Nothing changes.

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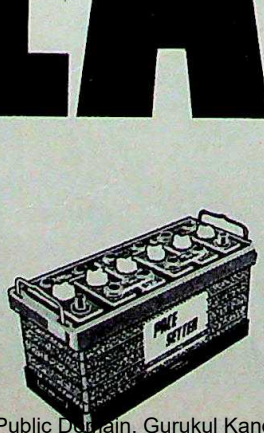

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THE MARKETS

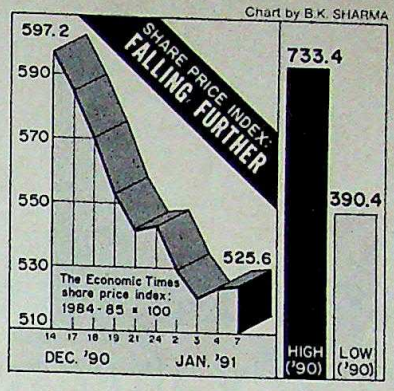
Uphill Task

The situation remains grim

LIKE in the movies, they appear to have showed up in the nick of time. For weeks the financial institutions and mutual funds—the power-players—watched from the sidelines as the national stock-markets traumatised themselves and share prices tumbled. The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) 30-share Sensitive Index crashed through the 1,000 mark, but managed to raise its head above that level by January 7. *The Economic Times* Index ended up lower by 18.4 points at 524.6 on January 4, but managed to close higher by a point three days later.

With the institutional investors back in play, albeit tentatively, the markets appeared to have bottomed out with some analysts predicting that the worst may be over. In Bombay, the Unit Trust of India, the insurance companies and Canbank Mutual Fund made sizeable purchases of a number of cash and forward scrips. According to

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



market estimates, January 3 saw the institutions buy shares worth Rs 25 crore—five times the aggregate daily purchases made by them in recent weeks. Despite this turnaround, heavyweight scrips like Reliance and Tata Steel still wallowed at the bottom. Reliance was marked down at Rs 105, while Tata Steel was quoting at Rs 145.

To make any kind of a sustained recovery, the market sentiment will have to be far stronger, and institutional muscle-power much more in evidence. But, adds a Bombay-based fund manager: "Unless we are clear about what is going to happen on the Gulf front, we do not anticipate a complete return to market by the large operators." This viewpoint is echoed all around. Says a leading broker: "If there are many more tax hikes in the budget, the market will tumble again. At the moment it is too weak to deal with any more bad news."

Between now and the next monsoon, analysts predict that the stock-markets may make a recovery, albeit a modest one. Price movements will be in a narrow band, less up or down but moving more sideways. Meanwhile, the stock exchange authorities are going to have to contend with the possibility of a payments crisis. In Ahmedabad, the authorities have clamped stringent trading curbs to avoid defaults. In Bombay, the situation is pretty grim as well. In the wake of the massive fall in share prices, several operators have denied their purchase commitments, leading to a potentially explosive situation.

The BSE authorities continue to shackle trading—by imposing punitive margins on selling and by curtailing trading sessions to just one hour a day, but most analysts think this is too little, too late. Asks one irate broker: "Where were the authorities when the index was falling below 1,400?" Clearly, hard times are far from over.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1990 HIGH	1990 LOW	CLOSE 7.1.91	Change in Fortnight
ACC	2625.00	325.00	1450.00	125.00 –
Ashok Leyland	143.75	69.50	120.00	nil
Asian Paints	305.00	207.50	227.50	2.50 +
Atlas Copco	68.00	32.50	44.00	3.00 –
Bajaj Auto	770.00	355.00	570.00	20.00 –
Baroda Rayon	1925.00	435.00	440.00	15.00 –
Bata India	107.00	62.50	88.00	nil
Ballarpur	325.00	120.00	242.00	2.00 +
Birla Jute	240.00	50.50	173.00	7.00 –
Blow Plast	140.00	34.50	55.00	12.50 –
Bombay Dyeing	445.00	155.00	160.00	5.00 +
Britannia Ind.	167.00	97.00	120.00	4.00 +
Brooke Bond	175.00	91.00	122.00	3.50 +
Cadbury	192.50	133.75	136.25	6.25 –
Castrol India	320.00	161.25	190.00	nil
Century Textiles	4850.00	2420.00	3725.00	nil
Colgate Palmolive	360.00	176.25	257.50	nil
Cyanamid	150.00	87.50	85.00	10.00 –
DCM	385.00	45.50	155.00	15.00 –
Dunlop	93.00	50.00	51.50	1.00 –
E.I. Hotels	65.25	46.25	50.00	2.50 –
Escorts	200.00	77.75	142.00	3.00 –
Finolex Cables	410.00	195.00	185.00	25.00 –
Garware Nylon	71.00	37.00	37.50	0.50 +
G.E. Shipping	54.75	27.00	27.00	1.00 –
G.S.F.C.	275.00	155.00	160.00	42.50 –
Grasim Ind.	277.50	106.00	182.50	7.50 +
Hind. Aluminium	417.50	205.00	223.75	1.25 –
Hind. Ciba	1900.00	650.00	750.00	50.00 +
Hindustan Lever	172.50	101.00	145.00	5.00 +
Hindustan Motors	58.50	19.80	22.00	0.50 +
Hoechst	3400.00	1295.00	2650.00	100.00 –
ICI India Ltd.	72.00	34.00	36.50	1.50 –
Indian Organic	91.25	35.00	35.00	3.00 –
Indian Rayon	175.00	84.00	122.50	10.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	305.00	190.00	267.50	15.00 –
ITC	182.00	48.75	111.00	11.00 –
J.K. Synthetics	90.00	35.00	32.50	2.50 –
Kinetic Engineering	255.00	130.00	165.00	2.50 +
Kirloskar Cummins	125.00	65.00	103.75	5.00 +
KSB Pumps	260.00	160.00	180.00	5.00 +
Larsen & Toubro	180.00	57.00	97.50	6.25 –
Lipton	112.00	62.50	65.00	nil
LML Ltd.	83.75	15.00	31.00	5.00 –
Madura Coats	285.00	100.50	193.00	20.00 –
M&M	130.00	60.00	67.50	nil
Milk Food	280.00	115.00	140.00	nil
Motor Industries	1400.00	670.00	700.00	nil
Mukand Ltd.	275.00	127.00	163.75	6.25 –
National Organic	1900.00	900.00	975.00	25.00 +
Nestle India	172.50	101.75	118.75	6.25 –
Nirlon	42.50	13.00	18.50	1.50 –
Orkay Silk Mills	61.00	14.50	21.50	0.50 –
Peico Electronics	78.00	24.00	55.00	4.00 –
Premier Auto	83.00	37.00	38.00	3.00 –
Raymond	175.00	70.00	125.00	nil
Reckitt & Colman	270.00	178.00	230.00	nil
Reliance Industries	245.00	50.00	105.00	18.00 –
Siemens India	162.50	96.00	125.00	nil
Shaw Wallace	122.00	65.00	80.50	5.50 –
Shriram Fibres	74.00	41.00	33.00	8.00 –
SKF Bearings	2775.00	1240.00	1800.00	200.00 –
SPIC	81.00	41.00	38.00	6.00 –
Tata Steel	275.00	103.25	145.00	2.00 –
Telco	272.50	110.00	176.25	8.75 –
Titan Watches	110.00	31.00	62.50	5.00 –
Vam Organic	205.00	108.75	107.50	2.50 –
Videocon Int.	600.00	105.00	220.00	30.00 –
Voltas	145.00	63.00	96.25	8.75 –
Wimco	52.50	15.75	21.50	1.50 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	14.2828	14.1337
Austria	Shilling	100	171.6046	170.0008
Bahrain	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Bangladesh	Taka	100	62.6231	51.8236
Canada	Dollar	1	15.9201	15.7613
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.1529	3.1236
Egypt	Pound	1	6.6784	6.4965
France	Franc	1	3.5778	3.4904
Germany	Deutschmark	1	12.1212	11.8203
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.3545	2.3318
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9666	0.9524
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1.6167	1.5956
Japan	Yen	100	13.6799	13.3333
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.8055	0.7909
Kuwait	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.7404	6.6735
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.3118	1.2765
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6410	0.6327
Netherlands	Guilder	1	10.7589	10.6499
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8483	0.8363
Singapore	Dollar	1	10.4409	10.5407
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1918	0.1890
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4580	0.4525
Sweden	Kroner	1	3.2431	3.2104
Switzerland	Franc	1	14.1928	14.0464
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0967	0.0933
Thailand	Baht	100	74.0543	72.1829
UK	Pound	1	34.8371	34.5841
USA	Dollar	1	18.3655	18.1901
UAE	Dirham	1	N/A	N/A
USSR	Rouble	1	22.7870	22.7847

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 8.1.91.

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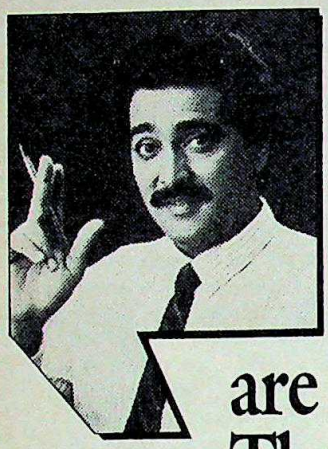
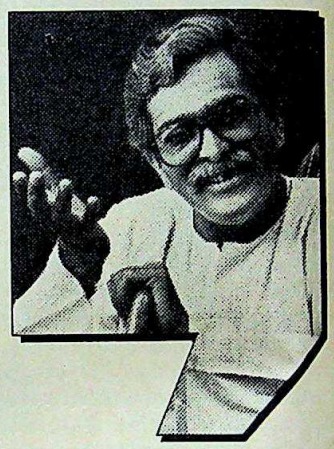


Hospitalisation expenses, especially after retirement are difficult to bear. That's why I will start providing for them, now!



Never before an insurance scheme like this!

GIC introduces BHAVISHYA AROGYA

After retirement, hospitalisation expenses can drain the family of its hard earned savings. That is why you should start preparing now to face any eventuality.

GIC's new unique BHAVISHYA AROGYA can indeed prove to be your support in times of need.

You pay premium in affordable annual instalments during your working life. And BHAVISHYA AROGYA provides you with hospitalisation/domiciliary hospitalisation expenses upto Rs. 50,000 for the rest of your life, from the retirement age you have selected. The limit per illness, however, is Rs. 20,000.

The retirement age selected by you could be any age between 55 years and 60 years.

You can increase the benefit amount of Rs. 50,000 in multiples of Rs. 10,000 by paying additional proportionate premium.

Premium varies with age at entry and retirement age selected by you. (Please refer premium table)

What's more, there is no need for a medical check-up. Even a statement of health is not required.

In case you wish to withdraw from the scheme, or should the unforeseen happen to you, a substantial portion of the premium paid will be refunded to you/your assignee provided no claim has been made till then.

ANNUAL PREMIUM (in Rs.) per Rs. 50,000 sum insured
INDICATIVE TABLE

Age of Entry (Completed Years)	Retirement Age (Running Age)					
	55	56	57	58	59	60
25	47	44	41	38	35	33
31	88	81	75	69	64	59
44	426	378	338	303	273	247
50	1335	1073	889	753	648	564
55	–	–	–	–	–	1517

One-time lump sum premium payment facility also available

Annual premium upto Rs. 3,000 is exempted from Income Tax under Section 80D. Group schemes with discount are also available for corporate clients.

Some of the other household/personal insurance schemes for you:

Yearly MEDICLAIM to cover hospitalisation expenses for self and family.

OVERSEAS MEDICLAIM to cover emergency medical expenses in foreign exchange while travelling abroad.

HOUSEHOLDER'S COMPREHENSIVE to cover loss against fire, lightning, floods, riots, strikes, burglary, etc.

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY to cover against legal liability for lawyers, doctors, accountants and others.

PERSONAL ACCIDENT to cover disabilities or death due to accidents.

For more information contact any office of our operating companies in your locality.

GENERAL INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA
Industrial Assurance Building, Churchgate, Bombay-400 020.

Operating Companies

NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

THE NEW INDIA ASSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

THE ORIENTAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

UNITED INDIA INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

R.K.SWAMY/BBDO GIC-3

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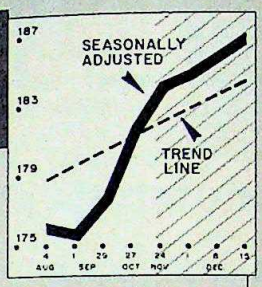
Inflation has finally reached a double-digit figure. The current trend rate of growth of money supply of about 18 per cent is too high to contain inflationary pressures in the economy. Imports are growing faster than exports, exacerbating the foreign exchange crunch.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1981-82=100

Current Trend
11.7% p.a.

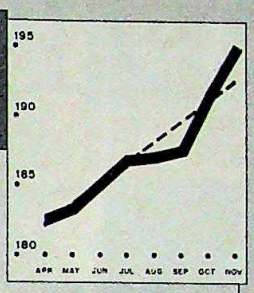


Wholesale prices continued their upward trend—inflation has touched the double-digit mark.

Consumer Price Index

1982=100

Current Trend
9.5% p.a.

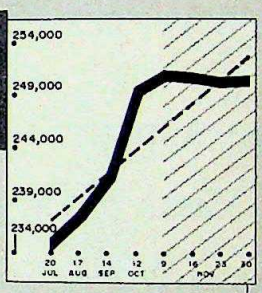


Consumer prices continue to spiral. Inflation has emerged as one of the most serious problems facing the economy.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
17.7% p.a.

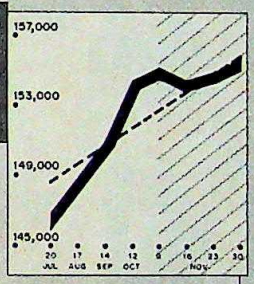


Money supply fell a bit and then picked up. The rate of growth of money supply has to be reduced to battle inflation.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
13.2% p.a.

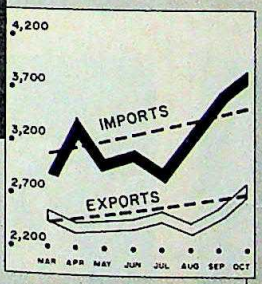


Commercial bank credit expanded last fortnight. However, industry continues to stagnate.

Foreign Trade

Rs Crore

Current Trend
19.3% p.a. EXPORTS
22.3% p.a. IMPORTS

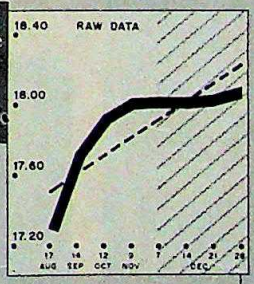


Both exports and imports increased in value terms, though imports are growing at a faster rate than exports.

Foreign Exchange Rate

Rs US$

Current Trend
3.8% p.a.

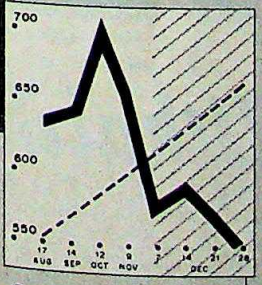


The rupee continues to devalue against the US dollar at a steady rate helping boost exports.

Share Price Index

1984-85=100

Current Trend
50.2% p.a.

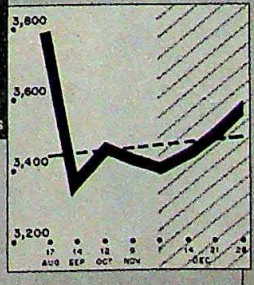


Share prices dropped last fortnight. However, there are no signs of an imminent crash.

Closing Gold Price

Rs per 10 grams

Current Trend
11.2% p.a.



Gold prices rise along with double digit inflation. The yellow metal seems like a safe haven for surplus cash.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of December 1990

	% Growth
Oranges	22.59
Betel-Nuts	10.33
Barley	7.01
Gur	6.63
Bananas	5.30
Lubricating Oil	4.84
Onions	4.83
Milk	4.79
Gingelly Oil	4.51
Ghee	4.42
Tobacco Raw	4.32
Rice	4.13
Moong	4.10
Turmeric	3.65
Cashew-Nut	3.60
Gingelly Seed	3.50
Butter	3.44
Bollers	3.28
Urad	2.85
Eggs	2.70
Hides Raw	2.37
Coconut Oil	2.32
Jowar	2.31
Internal Combustion Engines	2.29
Cycles	2.07
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	1.74
Electricity	1.57
Groundnut Oil	1.55
Board	1.54
Dairy Products	1.50
Trucks	1.40
Linseed	1.31
Groundnut Oilcake	1.23
Aviation Spirit	1.17
Petrol	1.16
Masoor	1.14
Polythene Moulding Powder	1.12
Transformers	1.12
Diesel Oil	1.10
Coal	1.09
Coir Yarn	1.04
Soda Ash	1.04
Bolts & Nuts	0.98
Pig Iron	0.92
Biscuits	0.91
Rails	0.90
Maida	0.89

Of the 134 series considered, 99 of them with a total weight of 63.287 had a positive rate of growth and 35 of them with a total weight of 21.565 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1990	1989
Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, November	2700	2820
Petroleum Refinery Product Thousand Tonnes, November	3915	4157
Letter of Intents Numbers, November	810	1112
Industrial Licences Numbers, November	328	370
Revenue Earning Goods Traffic Million Tonnes, November	26.95	25.96

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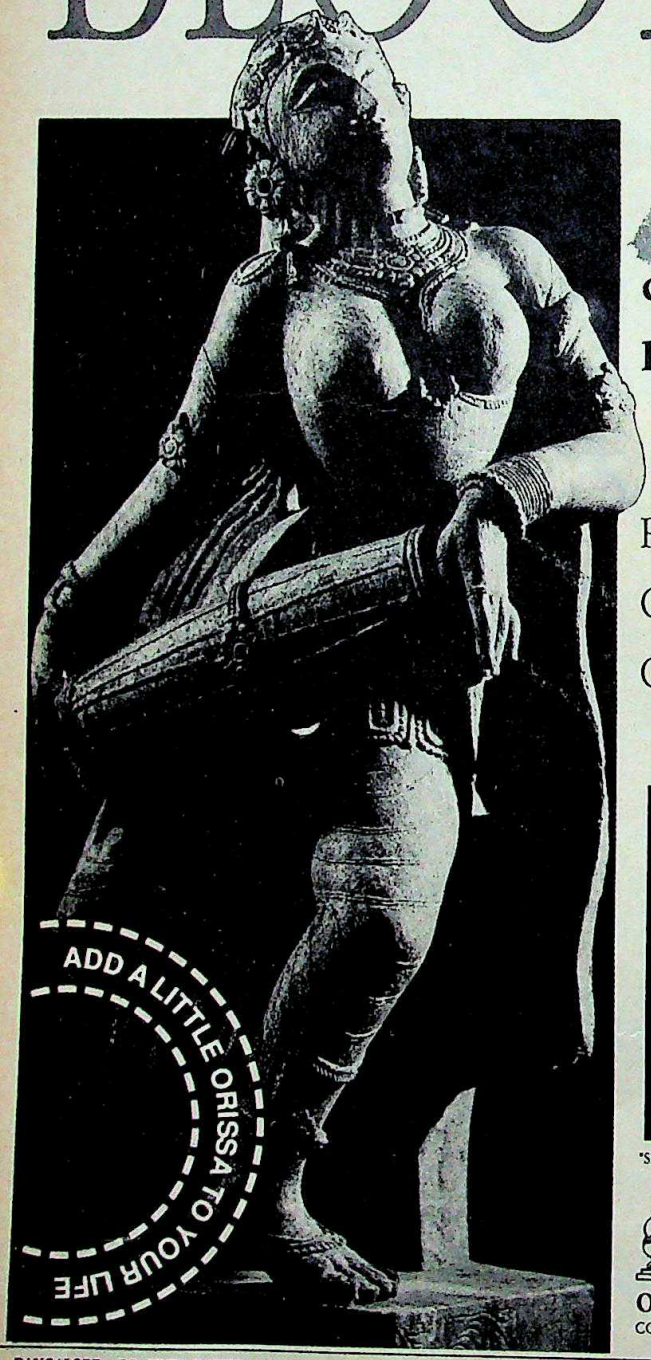
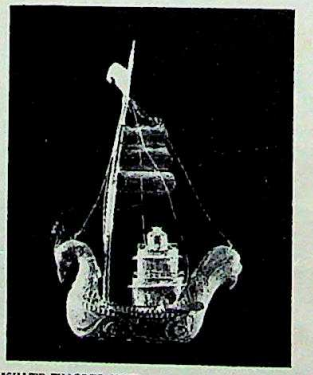
BLOODLINE



The lineage of artists, artisans in Orissa dates back to centuries — but then, the Bloodline has never ceased to flow.

Silver Filigree, Applique Works, Papier-machie, Masks, Dhokra and Clay Toys, Lacquer Work, Wood Carvings, Paintings & Pata-chitras.



"SILVER FILIGREE SHIP"

"DHOKRA WARRIOR"

Utkalika

ORISSA STATE EMPORIUM

CORPORATE OFFICE : 158 MADHUSUDAN NAGAR, BHUBANESWAR – 751 001.

BANGALORE – DR. PINTO TOWER 2nd FLOOR, 31 RESIDENCY ROAD, BANGALORE 25 **CALCUTTA** – G 31 & 32, CIT MARKET COMPLEX, 2 GARIAHAT ROAD (SOUTH), CALCUTTA 68 **DELHI** B/4 BABA KHARAK SINGH MARG, ORISSA EMPORIUM, NEW DELHI 1. **HYDERABAD** – 3rd FLOOR, METHODIST COMPLEX, OPPOSITE CHERMAS, ABIDS, HYDERABAD 1. **MADRAS** – SHOP NO. 9, 669 ANNASALAI, THOUSAND LIGHTS, MADRAS 6.

ORISSA — **BHUBANESWAR** – MARKET BUILDING, BHUBANESWAR 1. **BEHRAMPUR** – CITY HOSPITAL ROAD, BEHRAMPUR. **CUTTACK** – JAIL ROAD, CUTTACK 1. **PURI** – MOCHI SAHI CHHAK, PURI & SHOP 17, GRAND ROAD, PURI 1. **ROURKELA** – SECTOR 5 MARKET, ROURKELA 2 & SUPER BAZAR, UDIT NAGAR, ROURKELA 12. **ANGUL** – BAZAR CHHAK, ANGUL. **KORAPUT** – DEHOTTER MARKET, KORAPUT. **SAMBALPUR** – VEER SURENDRASAI MARG, SAMBALPUR.

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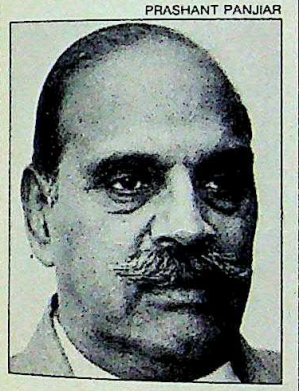
PUNJAB

Pushing Punjabi

● It was one area where at last they could see eye to eye. The Punjab Government and the militants found themselves on the same side when it came to Punjabi and the Gurumukhi script. However, it was the Panthic Committee (Dr Sohan Singh) which issued the ukase enforcing the use of Punjabi, christening it "Operation Mother Tongue". The dormant official language policy—promulgated in 1967, but never implemented all these 20 years and more—was instantly reactivated. Before the week was out the little township of Mohali, near Chandigarh, had saffron signboards flashing Gurumukhi in place of the English ones. Gurumukhi typewriters were brought out and dusted. There was also a sudden demand for Punjabi primers as the denizens of bumbledom realised the urgent need to brush up their Punjabi officialese.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Governor O.P. Malhotra

Governor, General O.P. Malhotra, took the oath in Punjabi and announced measures for promoting the language. The Punjab Language Department, which dragged its feet even to celebrate the 'Punjabi Day' for the last two years, has now come up with a week's programme to push Punjabi through. Confessed an official: "On the issue of Punjabi, militants have outwitted the Government."

MADHYA PRADESH

War of the Dailies

Photographs by R.C.SAHU

Navbharat's P.K. Maheshwari, *Bhaskar*'s Agarwal

● There was a whiff of war in Madhya Pradesh last fortnight, with the leading Hindi dailies *Navbharat* and *Bhaskar* launching an advertisement blitz. *Bhaskar*, fired the first salvo claiming it was the largest circulated daily published from Bhopal. *Navbharat*, accused its rival of "accounting jugglery".

Bhaskar with a circulation figure of 64,000 for its Indore edition is ahead of *Navbharat*'s 39,000 combined circulation of its Indore and Bhopal editions. But the two dailies are far behind the premier *Nai Duniya* (circulation: 1.28 lakh), which is rather strangely losing its hold in the market. However, as the media rivalry hots up it is the reader who benefits. He gets his 12-page paper at Rs 1.40, among the lowest priced dailies in the country.

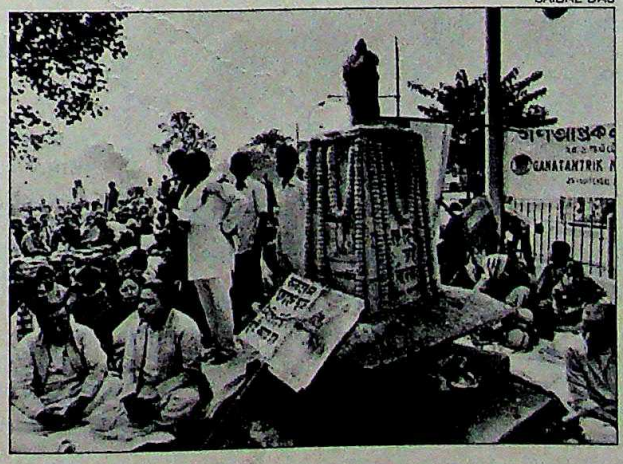
WEST BENGAL

Statue Strife

● When Chief Minister Jyoti Basu announced that the prime minister would unveil a statue of Ho Chi Minh near the Birla Planetarium in the heart of Calcutta, the Congress(I) declared their determination to put up a statue of Swami Vivekananda at the same site. They even persuaded Asoke Sen, union minister of steel and mines, to write to the prime minister not to accept Basu's invitation. But Chandra Shekhar has agreed to do the honours. The Congress(I) fears that Basu is getting uncomfortably close to the prime minister and that the Ho Chi Minh statue is one more bridge.

Agitation in front of Swami Vivekananda's statue

SAIBAL DAS



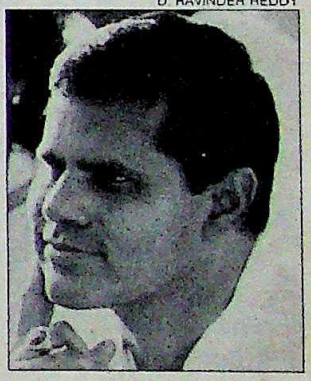
ANDHRA PRADESH

Tsar of Tirupati

● In one of his last acts former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Dr M. Chenna Reddy picked contractor and high-profile Andhra Pradesh Congress(I) Committee Vice-President T. Subbirami Reddy to be the chairman of the Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanams (TTD) which manages the Tirupati Temple (annual income: above Rs 100 crore).

Conforming to tradition Subbirami Reddy trekked uphill from the base town of Tirupati, had his head shorn clean, was blessed by an elephant and then went into the shrine to take the oath of office before the deity Venkateswara. "It is God's will," said Reddy.

D. RAVINDER REDDY



Subbirami Reddy: God's will

The new TTD chairman has big plans: recarpeting the approach road and erecting gateways to beautify the famous pilgrimage centre, building a Venkateswara temple on a 10-acre site near Delhi; increasing the number of rooms and rest houses in Tirumala and introducing computerised booking in state capitals so that pilgrims can book rooms. He even got Reliance's Anil Ambani and Parle's Ramesh Chauhan, among others, to agree to make a donation to the temple. "As one who combines material and spiritual activity I want to help devotees have darshan of God," says Reddy. Devotees hope that some of his plans come true.

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LTTE cadre: buying time

SRI LANKA

Lull in the Storm

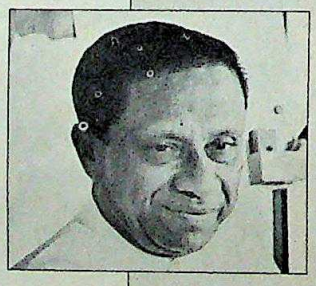
But LTTE's call for a cease-fire holds out little hope

NEW Year's eve in Sri Lanka was celebrated—if that is the right word—in a mood of quiet cynicism. A surprise call by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for a cease-fire with the army failed to arouse much enthusiasm. The knowledge that over 5,500 people had lost their lives in the past six months of fighting would have made any display of jubilation seem indecent. The general feeling was that if the guns in the north and east were falling silent, it was only because the rebels needed some breathing space.

Diplomats in India and Sri Lanka also believed that the offer was just a ruse for buying time. Faced with a hostile government in India and a crackdown by the DMK Government in Tamil Nadu, the leadership had decided to keep a low profile for the time being.

President Ranasinghe Premadasa reacted cautiously when the International Committee of the Red Cross conveyed the LTTE's decision to observe a cease-fire. He said he would need 72 hours to think over the offer. The last time such an offer had been made, the LTTE had used the time it won to regroup and prepare a fresh offensive.

The LTTE itself vigorously denies any ulterior motive, claiming that its only concern was to give civilians in the north and east a respite from the effects of the fighting and a chance to bring in more relief supplies. But Premadasa's fears were confirmed when on January 2 the LTTE violated the cease-fire by firing mortars and small arms at army detachments stationed near the Palay military base and at Elephant Pass in the north. Premadasa responded by eventually agreeing to the cease-fire.



Premadasa; Wijeratne: precarious position

A protracted war is likely as both sides are evenly matched.

Having got his fingers burnt last year, when he was about to close a deal with the LTTE, Premadasa is treading very carefully. The respite in fighting which preceded last June's explosion of violence had lulled people into a false sense of security. It soon disappeared as they saw the ferocity with which the two sides resumed the war.

Despite the current lull in hostilities, there is little doubt that Sri Lanka is heading for a protracted war, although the resources of both sides are far from infinite. Defence expenditure is mounting and, given its tattered economy, the Government can ill-afford to keep increasing the spending.

The reason why it may be protracted, however, is that the two sides are fairly evenly matched. Neither can expect a quick victory. The earlier euphoria and determination with which the army tackled the Tigers has long since evaporated. The best it managed to do was to keep them confined to the jungles.

The realisation soon dawned that the LTTE was not a mere band of scraggy, lungi-clad teenagers but a well-trained and motivated guerrilla force. Though it has lost 1,500 men, the LTTE is still far from finished. Even if the army manages to break into the Tigers' bastions in the north, it will find it almost impossible to hold the areas it claims to "liberate".

Awareness of these constraints has brought the army top brass round to accepting that the solution to the island's ethnic conflict will have to be a political one. How long this might take, though, is anyone's guess. The Defence Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne, has always maintained that the Tigers cannot be trusted. And he insists that a pre-condition for any talks is that the Tigers should lay down their arms.

The likelihood of this is remote. Indeed, the LTTE has been upping the ante by demanding the creation of a Tamil army as their condition for ceasing hostilities. This idea will go down like a lead balloon with the Government. It knows that any such force could be used sooner or later for waging war. Most people in Sri Lanka are hoping that by pitching their demands high, both sides are actually preparing the ground for eventual negotiations.

—RAMESH MENON

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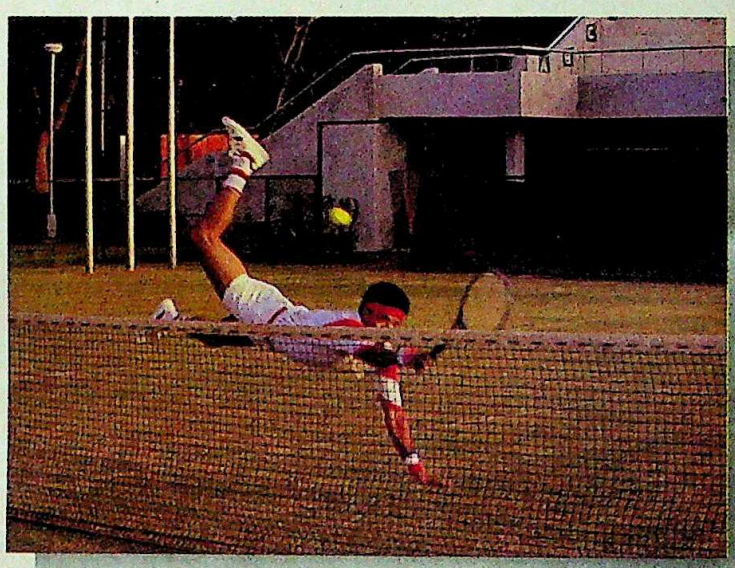

Matchpoint!
And I slipped! But I wasn't giving up.
Twisted in the air... did the impossible.
Crowd roared.
Celebration.
Moment to treasure.
All my life.

JIYAJEE FABRICS

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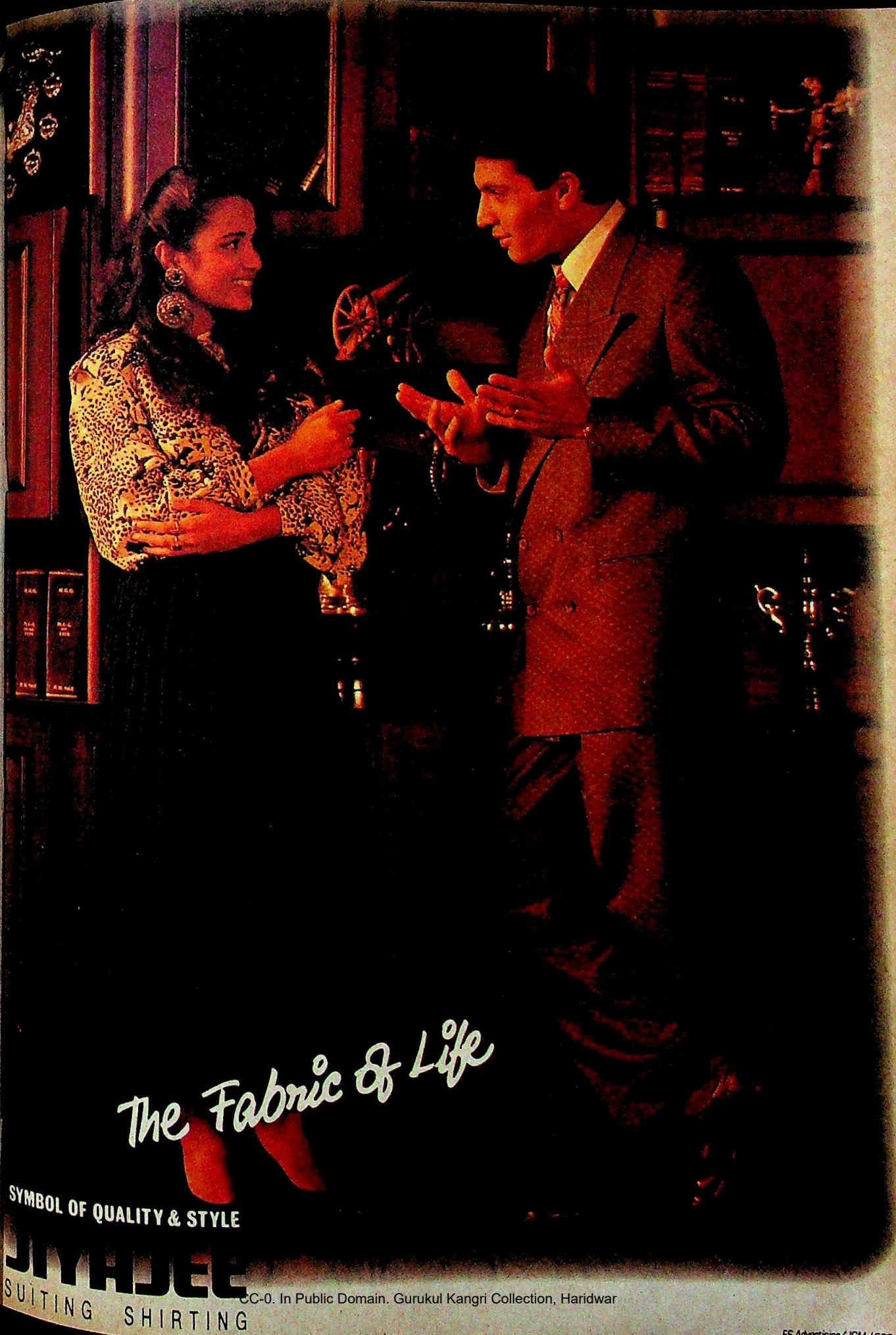

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BANGLADESH

Ominous Portents

Political feuds erupt over Ershad

REVOLTS in the prisons. Student mobs on the streets. If political observers in Bangladesh were reminded of Paris in 1789, it was because last fortnight's events in the country bore an uncanny resemblance to the French Revolution. With fierce feuds and political protest marking the run-up to the fifth parliamentary elections since liberation in 1971, the signs were ominous.

The target of the people's wrath: former President H.M. Ershad and his Jaatiya Party. Determined to prevent Ershad's Jaatiya Party from contesting the election were the All Party Students' Unity (APSU) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by Begum Khaleda Zia. The APSU ensured that it did not let up on its tirade against Ershad and his party. It staged rallies across the country demanding a ban on the political activities of the former President and his party.

And the caretaker President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed seemed more than ready to oblige. He systematically went about removing all Ershad loyalists from sensitive posts in the Government. The rightist BNP was gunning for the deposed President too because it feared that the Jaatiya Party would split its vote base and thus indirectly help the Awami League—led by Khaleda's arch rival Sheikh Hasina Wajed. Declared Khaleda Zia: "Ershad does not deserve to be interned in a comfortable house and therefore should be removed to the Dhaka Central Jail to await trial." Surprisingly, for once, her political foe Sheikh Hasina concurred. Said she: "Ershad committed crimes against the country and therefore he should not be allowed to take part in elections till he has faced a trial."

And it seemed only a matter of time before the Election Commission succumbed to the pressure. But then neither the acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed nor the BNP were leaving anything to chance. The Government filed an FIR against Ershad, charging him with the violation of the Arms Act. And the office of the acting Chairman of the Jaatiya Party, Mizanur Rahman, was attacked and his car set on fire.

Not that Ershad was suffering from a case of slow fade-out. In fact, there were even unconfirmed reports that he'd been allowed to go and pray in the cantonment mosque—with heavy police escort, of course. Moreover, Ershad hasn't lost his fan following altogether.

General Ershad (above); Khaleda Zia (below left) and Sheikh Hasina

Photographs by TARUN CHAKRAVARTI

Both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina want the deposed President Ershad to be put on trial for crimes against the country.

His supporters took out numerous processions demanding the release of the deposed President.

Clearly, the elections slated for next month aren't going to be peaceful—particularly if you were to go by past records. What's worse, the sparring isn't just restricted to the streets. As the Opposition, which had spearheaded a united movement against the earlier regime, has fallen apart, the Awami League and the BNP have stepped up their campaign against each other. Khaleda Zia openly accused the acting President of having sacrificed his neutrality, insinuating that he was a puppet in the hands of the Awami League.

Whether the elections are peaceful or not, one thing is clear: they will be a referendum on the form of government that the country will have. While the Awami League favours a parliamentary form of government, the BNP favours a presidential form. Quite apart from that, there are ideological differences as well. While the BNP claims to represent nationalistic forces, the Awami League calls for the unity of pro-liberation forces.

The squabble was further intensified with the BNP labelling the Awami League as pro-Indian and charging Sheikh Hasina of being an Indian agent. It even tried to whip up anti-India feelings, forcing the Indian High Commission to come out with a rejoinder refuting newspaper reports that there has been a large-scale infiltration of Indian security forces in plain clothes and large cache of arms.

With the country in turmoil, the army continued to be neutral. But the Government's appeal to surrender arms as well as its threat to debar those indulging in violence from the electoral process has fallen on deaf ears. Clearly, Bangladesh seemed to be heading for a crimson spring.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

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BALLIA

Waiting for the Windfall

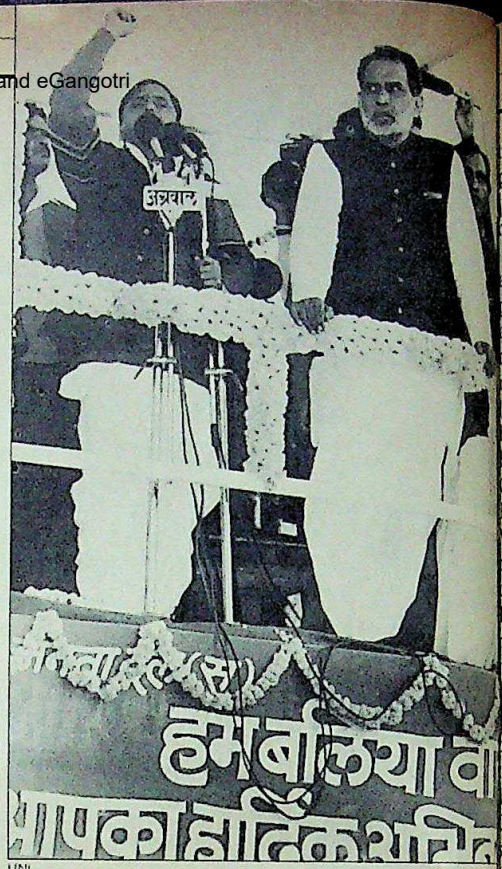
The prime minister has neglected his backward constituency but nursed the trusts he has floated.

By FARZAND AHMED in Ballia

MAHARISHI Bhrigu had once kicked Lord Vishnu in anger, according to Hindu mythology. Ballia, where the irreverent sage's ashram is located, seemed to be staging the Bhrigu act when its most illustrious son Chandra Shekhar landed there last month in the avatar of prime minister with two Union ministers and Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav in tow. The moment he called upon Yadav to address the public meeting, shoes, stones and sundry missiles were hurled at them and black flags waved. A humiliated Yadav made a vengeful exit, deaf to the pleas of the prime minister to stay back. An exasperated Chandra Shekhar admonished the audience to "learn how to behave".

The ugly episode spelled disaster for the prime minister's constituency in Uttar Pradesh. The day could have proved a turning point in the history of Ballia as he was expected to unveil an elaborate plan for its development and had for that purpose brought the chief minister along. But, said a government official: "The people missed a golden opportunity. After humiliating Mulayam in such a manner, one can't expect Ballia's fate to change."

This is unfortunate as Ballia has always received merely crumbs from the development pie, according to District Magistrate Shankar Aggrawal. On the eastern end of the state, bordering Bihar, it is the back of beyond; a dusty patch of land, further devastated through erosion by three mighty rivers—Gang Ghagra and Tons. No infrastructu worth the name was developed he There are no major transport links an sugar mill and a spinning mill constitu



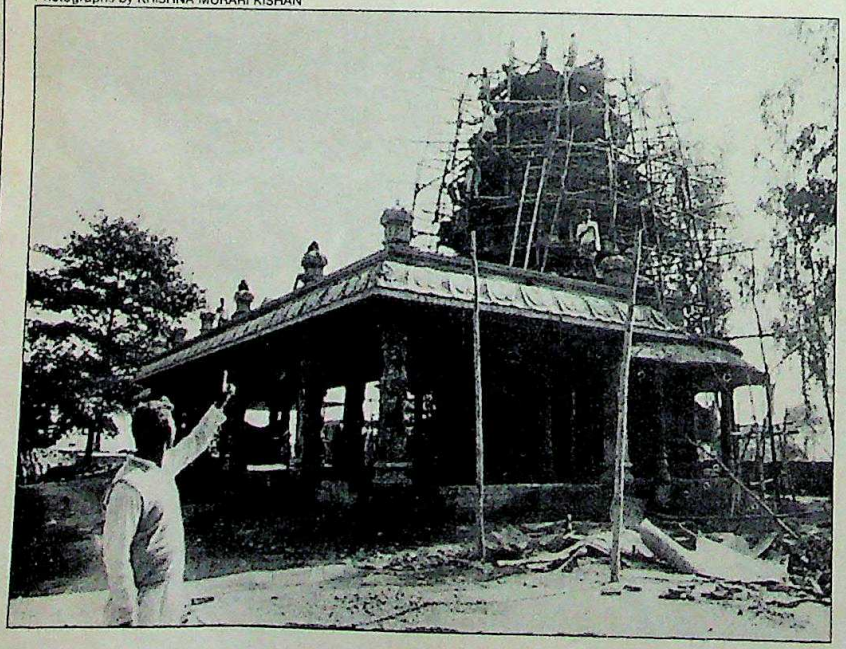
UNI

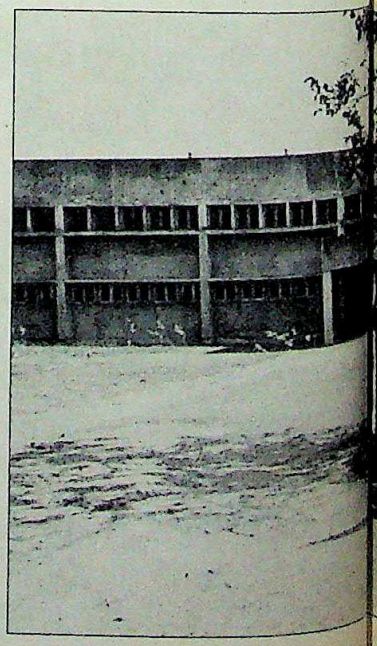
Chandra Shekhar with Yadav in Bal

Chandra Shekhar's native village of Ibrahimpatti seems to be the only place that is prospering.

The temple being built (left); and the Rachna Chakra Hospital in Ibrahimpatti

Photographs by KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN





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the industry. A dilapidated 150-bed hospital offers health care to the populace, half of whom live on *litti* (small flour balls cooked on a cowdung *chulah*).

But hope had surged through the area when Chandra Shekhar was catapulted to power. It was a virtual Diwali as candles were lit, sweets distributed and the youth danced in a frenzy. Overnight the local Janata Dal appended an (S) to its nomenclature. People expected him to do for them what Rajiv Gandhi had done for Amethi. They had given Chandra Shekhar another chance in the 1989 elections (he was also elected from Maharajgunj in Bihar but decided to represent Ballia, termed his pocket borough) after ruthlessly rejecting him in 1984 when his traditional Congress(I) rival Jagannath Choudhary stopped his march to a third consecutive victory.

Choudhary won in 1984 because he cornered the Scheduled Castes' and backwards' support—the advantage that was negated by a BSP candidate in 1989. The Muslims then opted for Chandra Shekhar because of his secular stance. And as he himself is a Rajput, Chandra Shekhar is always assured of the Thakur (Rajput) vote.

Ballia, like most of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, is extremely caste-ridden. With an estimated population of 20 lakh, it is dominated by Thakurs, Brahmins and Bhumihars who number nearly 12 lakh, while backwards, mainly Ahirs (Yadavs) number 5.5 lakh. It is because the Thakurs lord over the district that Mulayam Singh Yadav was booed at the Ballia rally for his stridently pro-Mandal stance. And Chandra Shekhar himself was heckled and his car stoned by angry

"It is easy to criticise but very difficult to create something. Only those who create something are criticised."

Jai Prakash, nephew

upper caste youths two months earlier when he had visited the area. They wanted to know why he did not take a stand and resign from the Janata Dal to protest against V.P. Singh's Mandal recommendations. Again, the caste complexion here ensured peace even at the height of the anti-Mandal agitation. Communally too Ballia has remained an island of peace.

WHAT gets the people's goat is the non-development of the area. Seventy per cent of the people are still illiterate and eking out a living from the land. Perhaps following the law of the excluded middle, no middle class has ever managed to emerge here. Even the district officials admit that people here are either very rich—landlords, contractors—or very poor. Says Sneh Ranjan, a local journalist: "There is a deep sense of frustration and it is growing day by day." The finger is increasingly being pointed at Chandra Shekhar even though people still fondly call him "Netaji" and "Adhyakshji". Says Ram Chandra Choudhary, an unemployed youth: "Our leader has never cared for the people here and remains busy in New Delhi, Haryana and Karnataka." Many observers agree that Chandra Shekhar has neglected Ballia.

Sensing that people were getting restive, the district administration on its own recently did a comprehensive study: "Major problems of Ballia and proposed solutions". The report highlighted the lack of infrastructure and proposed new projects besides comple-

"All these trusts floated by Chandra Shekhar are like blotting-paper. They suck away money leaving no trace or stain."

Manager Singh, former associate

tion of schemes envisaged in the past. It specifies that no national highways pass through the district and the state highways that do, together measure just 177 km, and around 160 villages have no roads of any kind. Another indicator of backwardness is that there are only 32,000 power consumers in the district with an average demand of a low 24 MW and merely 47 per cent villages have been electrified.

Health care is so sketchy that "if somebody falls sick seriously, we can do nothing but pray to God", says a farmer. Even at the only hospital in Ballia "operation theatres are in extremely bad condition and in the absence of a blood bank, serious patients have to be taken to Varanasi, 150 km away", points out District Magistrate Aggarwal. The plight of the 23 primary health centres is worse. Apparently moved by the pitiable condition of the hospital when he visited Ballia last month along with the prime minister, Union Health Minister Shakeel-ur-Rahman promised all help to improve facilities and to double the bed capacity.

The industrial scene is also deplorable. The only two big units—a spinning mill and a sugar mill—are in the cooperative sector. The spinning mill has only utilised about 5 per cent of its licensed capacity of 50,000 spindles. Consequently, there is a big army of unemployed youth who take to rowdyism at the slightest provocation. But Jai Prakash, Chandra Shekhar's nephew who lives in Ibrahimpatti, reasons differently. Says he: "In the past several industrialists had responded to Netaji's

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MYSORE LAMPS

The Premier Lighting House.

INDOOR LIGHTING
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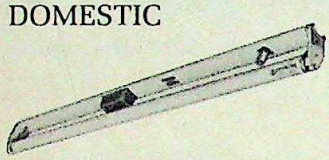

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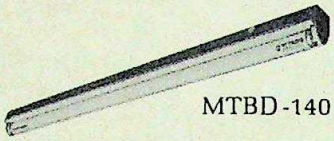

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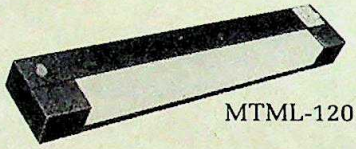

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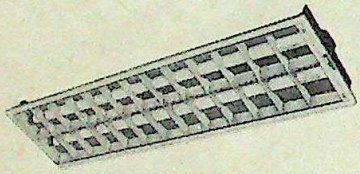

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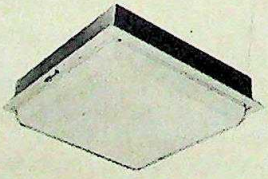

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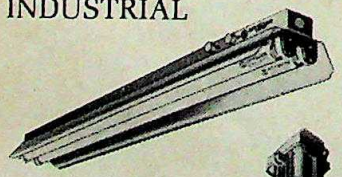

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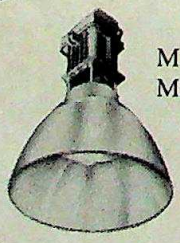

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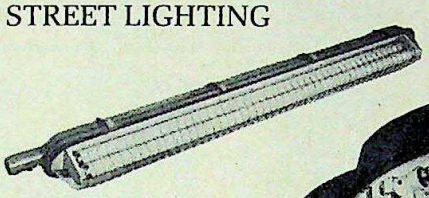

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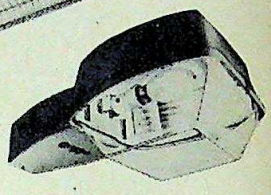

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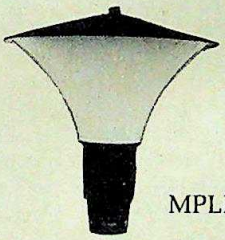

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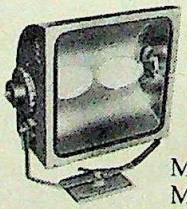

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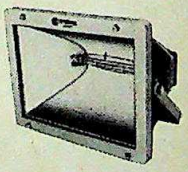

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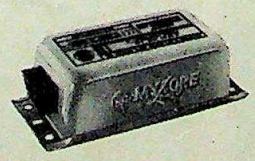

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call for setting up industries but they could not dare because of rowdy elements. The sugar mill at Resra is always paralysed because of rowdyism in the name of trade unionism. People should know how to behave."

The district administration has now chalked out development activities costing Rs 100 crore including the Rs 85-crore project to convert metre gauge into broad gauge railway lines.

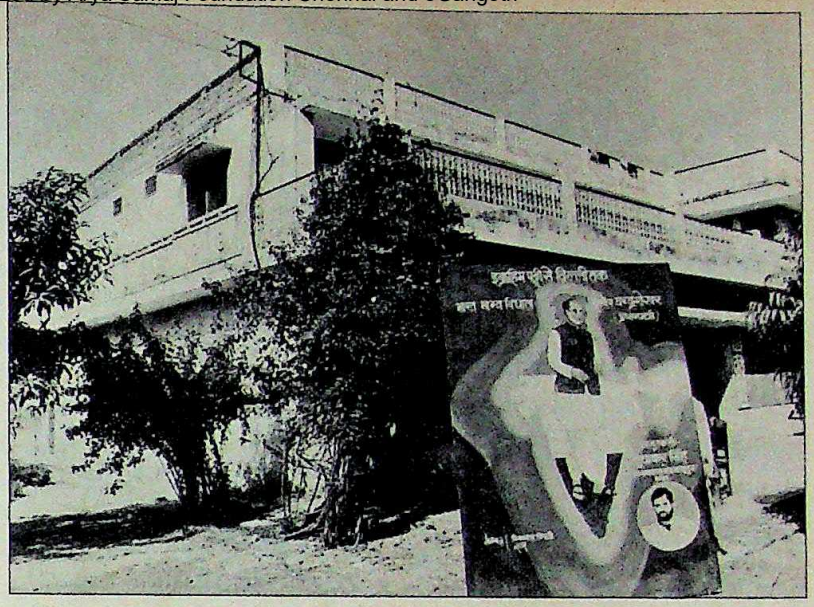
Ballia in any case is becoming a VIP area. Railway Minister Janeshwar Mishra also hails from here and four MLAs from Ballia are in Yadav's cabinet. So now ministerial visits have become very frequent. Chandra Shekhar and his men are now organising the first national convention of Janata Dal(S) scheduled for the end of January at Saura in the district, to be attended by two lakh people. The massive exercise may divert the attention from developmental activities.

So far the only place that has prospered is Chandra Shekhar's native village, Ibrahimpatti, where outside his mansion stands a huge portrait of him against the backdrop of a map of the country, with the legend: "*Bharat ke bhagya vidhata.*" (The maker of India's destiny.) Ibrahimpatti is also the site of a massive temple being built in the image of Madurai's famous Meenakshi temple. The construction is being supervised by Jai Prakash who feigns ignorance about the budget. Says he: "It is being built by public donations, but I don't know who pays for it and where it is paid."

However, what has drawn flak are the controversial trusts floated by Chandra Shekhar. One of them is the Rachna Chakra Foundation Trust with a mammoth capital base. It is busy setting up a 150-bed hospital in Ibrahimpatti at a pace that would make a snail blush as it's 38 years since Jayaprakash Narayan laid the foundation-stone in 1952. The trust was formed 15 years ago with half the money donated by the public and the rest was to come from the state and Central governments. However, only the state Government has delivered: Rs 80 lakh last year in two instalments.

Eyebrows have been raised over the use of funds meant for the trust. Manager Singh, an old associate of Chandra Shekhar but now a detractor, claims that the trust's balance sheets have never been made public but he has information that Rs 20 lakh was withdrawn from the trust's account and taken to Delhi.

The other trusts Chandra Shekhar has been involved with are: the JP Memorial Trust in Sitambadiara in Bihar, the Acharya Narendra Dev Siksha Sansthan at Saura in Ballia district, and the Bharat Yatra Kendra at Bhondsi in Haryana. In Bhondsi now stands his opulent farmhouse on 14 hectares of land donated by the village panchayat on the *padyatri's* birthday in 1984.



Chandra Shekhar's portrait outside his mansion in Ibrahimpatti

Dominated by Thakurs, Ballia has earned notoriety as an exporter of muscle power to other states.

CHANDRA Shekhar's friends in high places have ensured a steady flow of big money to these trusts. However, mystery shrouds the outflow. For instance, for the JP Trust he had collected Rs 12 lakh, which according to its secretary Jagdish Bhai, was used to set up a memorial and a library. Another Rs 25 lakh followed courtesy Ramakrishna Hegde, the then chief minister of Karnataka. Manager Singh alleges that the amount has been siphoned away: the accounts are maintained in Delhi. Observes he: "All these trusts floated by Chandra Shekhar are like blotting-paper. They suck away money leaving no trace or stain." To which Jai Prakash counters: "It is easy to criticise but very difficult to create something. And only those who create something are criticised."

Chandra Shekhar can well say that Manager Singh's diatribe is motivated. During the last assembly elections, even though he was the official Janata Dal candidate, Chandra Shekhar campaigned for Vikram Singh, brother of his long-time friend and Dhanbad don, Suryadeo Singh. Eventually both of them lost and Manager Singh is now busy firing missives at the chief minister and the prime minister against the "reign of terror" let loose in Ballia by Vikram Singh and his cohorts.

But Manager Singh is not alone in raising the trusts bogey. Some of Chandra Shekhar's political rivals including the former Congress(I) MP Choudhary have also sought an explanation from him on his role in these trusts, after he became the prime minister, which he has characteristically chosen to ignore.

The prime minister has invited equally strident criticism over the protection he has allegedly provided to Suryadeo Singh. The accusations have persisted because even now Chandra Shekhar has not denied his association with the don. Meanwhile, Ballia has earned notoriety as the chief exporter of muscle power to other states. Admitting that the people here are rowdy by nature, Aggarwal, however, argues that they are not criminals.

So while problems persist, most of his voters consider Chandra Shekhar the last hope for Ballia. They are willing to forgive and forget his earlier lapses and turn a blind eye to his trusts, provided he starts delivering the goods. But if he fails, the Bhrigu kick may be quick in the coming.

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SARDAR SAROVAR PROJECT

Battle Royal

An angry confrontation is on between the pro-and anti-Narmada Dam activists.

By UDAY MAHURKAR in Ferkuva

An anti-dam rally: angrily espousing a cause

IN the sleepy hamlet of Ferkuva on the Gujarat-Madhya Pradesh border, the ingredients of an epic battle are brewing. Ranged on one side are thousands of tribals and environmental activists led by the formidable Baba Amte. Facing them is a human wall of Gujaratis and social workers determined to block their entry into Gujarat. The *casus belli* is the Narmada Dam project. And the mood in the warring camps is swinging between outright hostility and uneasy stalemate.

One side is determined that the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) on river Narmada in Bharuch district will go ahead. The other, spearheaded by Baba Amte, is determined to halt the Rs 6,400-crore project—one of the biggest enterprises ever undertaken in India since Independence.

Armed with tractor-trollies full of food supplies, the Sangharsh Yatris began their march from Barwani in Madhya Pradesh on Christmas day and travelled through the Narmada Valley before arriving at the Gujarat border, where the pro-dam legions stood massed on the other side.

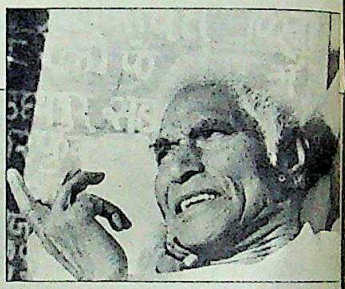
The rallying cries of the two opposing groups make their aims clear. Medha Patkar, who has almost single-handedly mobilised the tribals in the Narmada Valley against the project, declares: "The project is socially unjustifiable, ecologically unsustainable and economically unviable."

Retaliates a pro-dam worker, equally vehemently: "They are espousing the cause of the displaced persons alone. But we are fighting for the lakhs of drought-affected and flood-affected people in Gujarat. The dam is the only way to end the miseries of these people. It is Gujarat's lifeline."

Each side has been bent on showing

BABA AMTE

"I'm ready to die"



BABA Amte, 70, spoke to Senior Correspondent UDAY MAHURKAR *last fortnight about his determination to oppose the project. Excerpts:*

Q. ***What made you take up cudgels against the SSP?***

A. I am basically against all big dams as they are symbols of development that enrich some at the cost of others. I am for development with a human face.

Q. ***Gujaratis charge you with brainwashing the Adivasis and pitting them against the other.***

A. The allegation is unfounded. I would rather die than see such a confrontation. I am trying to remove the feeling of alienation amongst the Adivasis. During my Bharat Jodo Yatra I found they feel more alienated than even the Sikhs.

Q. ***Will you win this battle?***

A. Our struggle has already passed a death warrant against all such giant projects in future. The people who are going to be displaced by the SSP are determined to fight till the end.

Q. ***What if the Government goes ahead with the construction work?***

A. The fight will go on. I am prepared to die for this cause. And my death will achieve what my life couldn't. Plus, I will organise drown-and-die squads of the oustees who will take a pledge to drown themselves in the Narmada.

Q. ***Isn't a solution possible?***

A. Every national problem has a national solution. We want a dialogue on the project's review. But first the cutting of trees in the forest must stop. So should the shifting of oustees and the construction work.

Q. ***What is Gujarat's stand?***

A. They are willing to talk only on the rehabilitation issue.

Q. ***You have alleged that there has been large-scale corruption in the SSP's construction work.***

A. All building contractors fill the coffers of political parties. We want the authorities to investigate the assets of the owners of Jaiprakash Associates, the dam constructors.

Q. ***Is it practical for you to call for a halt on the project when Rs 1,000 crore has already been spent on it?***

A. Going by the fact that its cost would escalate to over Rs 11,000 crore by the time it is completed, it is only 1 per cent of the total amount. It is a small price to pay for an issue that concerns thousands of people.

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Photographs by KAMAL BHOJANI

A pro-dam demonstration: pitching for progress

BABUBHAI JASHBHAI PATEL

"They have closed minds"

ONE of the strongest supporters of the Sardar Sarovar Project, Babubhai Jashbhai Patel, 80, after taking over as minister for Narmada development, sped up the pace of work on the project. Last fortnight he spoke to UDAY MAHURKAR. *Excerpts:*

Q. ***Is an agreement with the anti-dam activists possible?***

A. Yes, if the demand is limited to the question of oustees. Lowering the dam's height by even an inch will prevent adequate water supply to the arid zone of the project area.

Q. ***Activists claim there isn't enough land for rehabilitation.***

A. Five acres of land is being given even to the landless amongst the oustees. We have enough land to rehabilitate all.

Q. ***Activists also allege that just 10 per cent of the drought-prone areas of Gujarat will be covered.***

A. Of the total 19 lakh hectares to be irrigated, 13 lakh is in these areas and Rajasthan. Of the 4,720 villages, which are to get drinking water, 2,568 are in Gujarat.

Q. ***What if the people of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra refuse to leave?***

A. That is a hypothetical question. Still, our rehabilitation package is so attractive that they will be tempted to accept it.

Q. ***Is it true that the clearance granted by the Ministry of Environment to the SSP in 1987 was conditional?***

A. This is untrue. The only condition put by the Ministry of Environment was that the environment safeguard measures are planned and implemented *pari passu* with the progress of work on the project. And we are fully abiding by it.

Q. ***Why have the activists and Baba Amte taken such a hard line?***

A. They have a closed mind. But to be fair to them, their apprehensions are mainly based on the poor record on the rehabilitation front.

Q. ***What is the way out of this stalemate?***

A. All of Gujarat is one on the dam issue. The activists are concerned about the problems of one lakh oustees alone. But we are concerned about millions of people pining for water and the 7.5 million people—mostly Adivasis—affected by floods in the Narmada. The only way out is that they stop brainwashing the illiterate and help us rehabilitate them.

the size of its infantry. As the anti-dam crowd began trudging its way to the border, the pro-dam organisations staged a massive rally on December 29 with the active support of Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel and the Minister for Narmada Development, Babubhai Patel.

Ferkuva was swamped by the 80,000 people who rallied to the "save the dam" cry. Chimanbhai told the cheering crowds: "I want the Baba to know that the people of Gujarat and their government are united. Their resolve is as firm today as it was during the lifetime of the Mahatma and the Sardar."

THE historical allusions reveal the messy background to the *cause celebre*. First conceived in 1946 by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the foundation-stone was laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the early '60s. Controversy dogged the project from day one and has lasted decades: from the height of the dam to which state would be responsible for the farmers and tribals displaced by its creation.

So it's an issue that people in the area have grown up with and have fixed opinions on. The war of words between the two camps on the border became shriller on New Year's day when the pro-Narmada ranks moved closer to the spot where the anti-Narmada ranks were camped. Loudspeakers—or just sheer lung power—blared out angry slogans across the divide. Chunibhai Vaidya, from the pro-dam side, made an incursion into enemy territory to announce that it was unthinkable that the Government might review the project.

At the heart of the whole dispute is the fate of the people—mainly tribals—who will be displaced. Baba Amte says that he is opposed in principle to all government projects of this size. And he intends to return the Padmashri and Padma Vibhushan which he was awarded for his social work as a protest against the way the Patel Ministry has treated his anti-dam followers.

The main complaint of the anti-dam organisations is that it will be impossible to rehabilitate all the people who will be displaced. In the Nimad region of Madhya Pradesh—where the agitation has snowballed—nearly one lakh people, mainly Adivasis, will be displaced.

Second, they say the project will be a financial disaster. Costs are likely to escalate to a dizzying Rs 11,000 crore. And thirdly, the dam waters will cover only 10 per cent of the drought-affected regions.

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Their agitation intends to focus on the following:

▶ mobilising the people who will be displaced;

▶ putting pressure on the Environment Ministry to withdraw its approval;

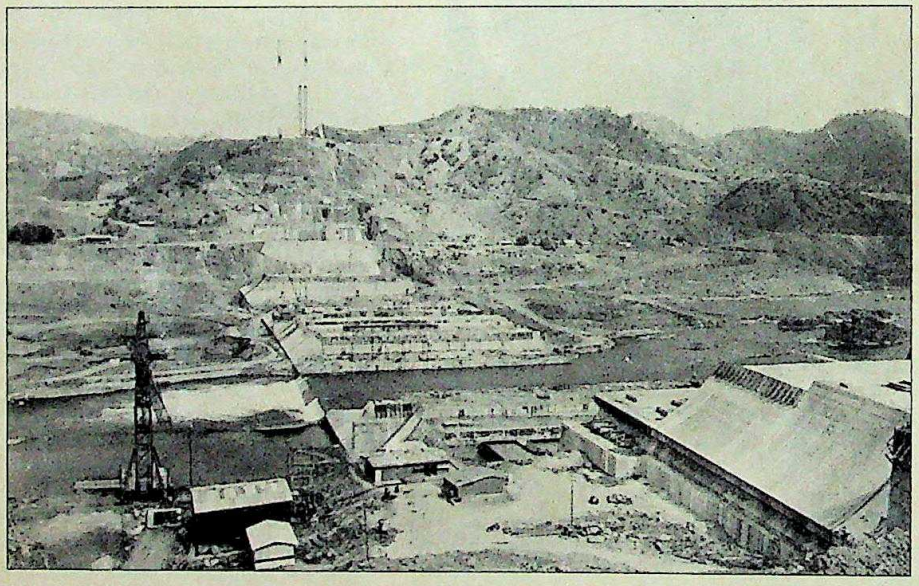
▶ persuading the World Bank to stop aid to the project through Japan, the World Bank's second biggest donor.

The campaign has already led to one World Bank expert speaking out against the project and calling for aid to be suspended "until the Gujarat Government corrects the various deficiencies which exist with regard to the displaced people".

On the other side of the fence are the supporters of the dam who are enraged by the obstacles they feel are being put in the way of Gujarat's development. Their memories are permanently scarred by the tragedy of the three-year-long drought which ravaged the state in 1984-87. Rs 1,500 crore had to be spent on relief operations; Rs 5,000 crore worth of agricultural production was lost; and several lakh of cattle died like flies and deprived farmers and landless labourers in the state of their livelihood.

The poor, as always, bore the brunt of the devastation. Says Chunibhai Vaidya, a prominent pro-dam activist: "The people and government of Gujarat are united on this issue. The reports that only rich farmers and industrialists will benefit from the dam being built are akin to the propaganda put out by Goebbels."

> "The false reports that only rich farmers and major industrialists will benefit from the dam are akin to the propaganda put out by Goebbels."
>
> CHUNIBHAI VAIDYA, *Pro-dam activist*



Site of the Sardar Sarovar Project: drowned in dissent

> "The Narmada Dam project is socially unjustifiable, harmful to the environment and, finally, it's economically unviable."
>
> MEDHA PATKAR, *Social worker*

The pro-dam camp contains quite a few social workers who initially opposed the project tooth and nail. Prominent campaigners such as Anil Patel changed their minds when the former government of Amarsinh Chaudhary announced a fresh rehabilitation package for displaced people in 1987. Now Anil Patel says: "The package is the most generous we can expect. If those fighting for the tribals really want to help them, they should help the Goverment implement the rehabilitation programme."

The anti-dam activists say they are prepared to talk to the state Government provided it halts construction of the river bed. This is unlikely even to be considered. Work on the project—awe-inspiring in its scale—is hurtling along at breakneck speed. Each statistic connected with the dam is very impressive. An average of 5,600 cubic metres of construction work is carried out every day. And this is likely to go up to 7,000 cubic metres. A giant cable trolley costing Rs 22 crore was recently installed to speed up the work. The towers of the trolley are 110 metres high, taller than the Qutab Minar.

Labourers and engineers work in three shifts 24 hours a day. Each shift has 800 workers. At night, flood lights are used. Over 200 trucks work round-the-clock carrying cement and gravel. Every day the project swallows up about Rs 1 crore.

Projects of this scale develop a momentum of their own. This one is already so far underway that it's hard to imagine its opponents will succeed in calling it off. With the Government's resolve to go ahead, and large sections of public opinion backing it, the dam's opponents will find the going tough. So the stage in the hamlet of Ferkuva is set for the battle and the cast of thousands is ready, but the only thing really moving in the conflict is the police, scurrying between the two sides to ensure the stalemate doesn't escalate to all-out war.

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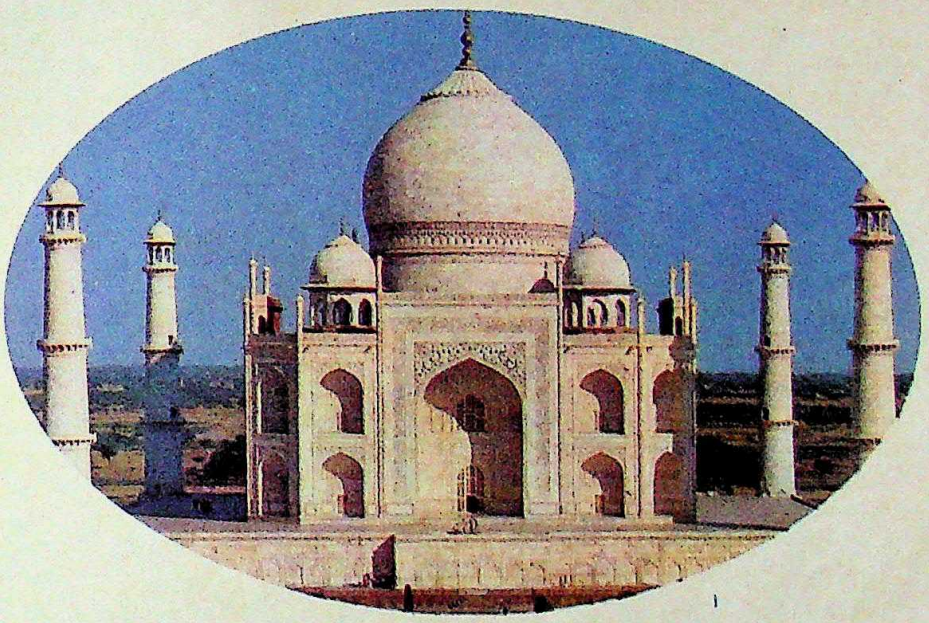

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ITDC

Ruralite Evenings

Devi Lal decrees five-star rebates for village folk

THANK god, it's Friday. You step into your glad rags for a night out on the town at a hotel discotheque. Or for a quiet, candle-light dinner at the Frontier restaurant in Delhi's Ashok Hotel. Only to do a double-take as a horde of strapping dhoti-clad farmers, complete with *pagris*, walk by. Don't be surprised.

From now on, the Tourism Ministry has reserved two days of the week—Thursday and Friday—for ruralites. On these days, people with VPO (village post office addresses)—the incorrigible Tourism Minister Devi Lal's pet obsession—can avail themselves of a 50-per cent discount on food at all India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) hotels.

Ruralite evenings, it will be, twice a week, at the country's 40 ITDC hotels and restaurants. The redoubtable Tau explains the rationale behind his scheme: "When a villager passes a hotel, he feels scared and wonders what lies within. He thinks only people with suits and neckties can go in. The discount facility will help ruralites to shed their inferiority complex." It is not fair, the Tau thinks, for rural Indians to feel inferior. Not when they comprise 70 per cent of the country's population.

The genesis of the 'Villagers' Days' scheme lies in Devi Lal's trip to Udaipur last month to inaugurate the Aangan Shilpgram mela. Seeing the flocks of tourists thronging to the fair where craftsmen from different states had displayed their goods, the tourism minister decided to turn the mela concept on its head. Why couldn't the craftsmen, the poor sons of the soil, go into hotels just as the rich—which in Devi Lal's language is another word for urban—and foreign tourists did, he wondered?

Inspired as he was, the whimsical Devi Lal announced the discount facility right there and then. Within three days of his return to Delhi, the ITDC headquarters received an administrative order from the Tourism Ministry saying that a 50-per cent rebate be given to people from rural backgrounds on Thursdays and Fridays. However, no date was mentioned as to when the new scheme was to come into force. Moreover, the term 'rural background' remained ambiguous. Going by Devi Lal's words, the facility was to be open to "dhoti-clad and rural-attired people"—again an equally nebulous category.

But if ITDC officials were left wondering about the intricacies of 'rural-attire', senior ministry officials broke out in a cold sweat thinking about the details of the scheme. For instance, just dho kurta didn't qualify as rural-attire sin Delhiites and Bombayites could al wear dhotis merely to take advanta of the rebate. Moreover, the sartori line dividing rural women and urb women was thin—as both wear sare and salwar kurtas.

Apart from the sartorial ambigui ministry officials were equally flu moxed by the question of identificati How were ruralites stepping into the hotels for the discount to be identifie Ministry officials have put up a propos before Devi Lal: those from the rur sector who wish to use the faci should carry letters or Identity car issued by their local sarpanch patwari. Not the one to incur th feminists' wrath, the proposal includ the issue of sep rate cards f women—in ca they feel like going out on a day wh their husbands aren't free. This probably a result of the furore genera in Parliament over the clubbing of ru women together with their menfolk the identity cards. But, the propos pending until the minister's approv

Predictably, ITDC is resisting move on the grounds that it will revenue. Its officials say it will have suffer an annual loss of Rs 3 cr because of the new scheme. While gross operating profit in 1990 was Rs crore, it is expected to fall to around crore in the current year due to sudden slump in the market, they s

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA

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Howev ITDC offici erence be star hotel. of dal coul and Rs 55 than Rs 8 each. And rates, the even after hotels will chicken w after there be exempt tax. And they'd ha

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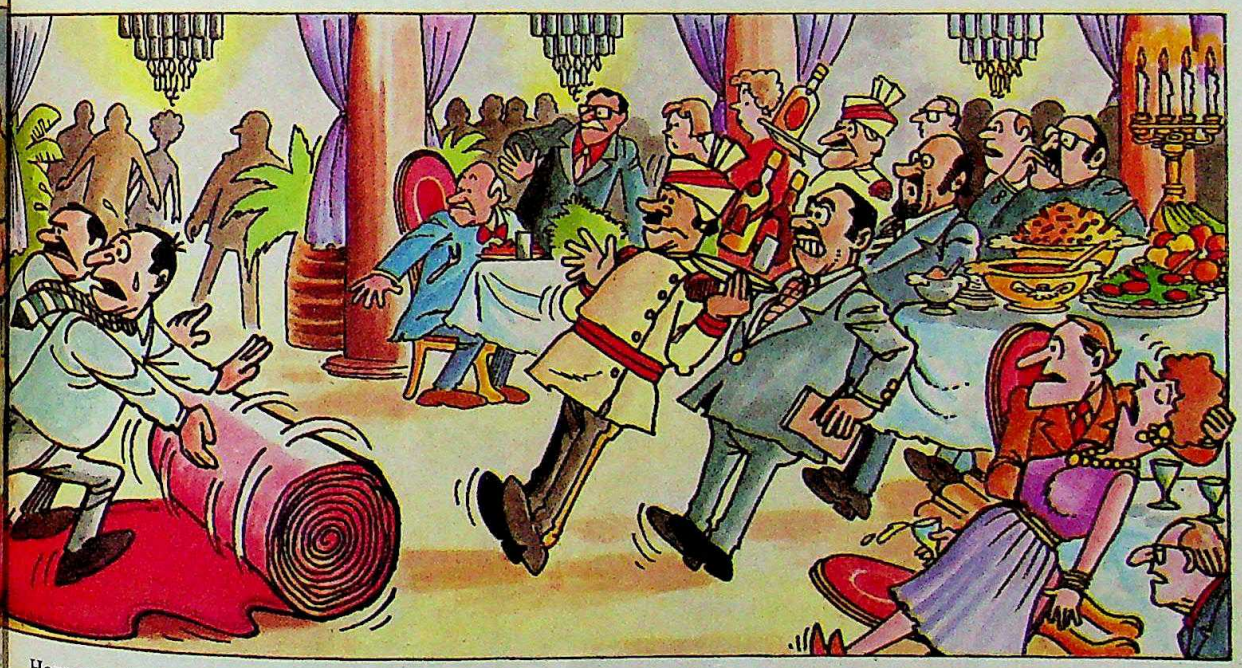
In an effort to thwart the "ridiculous move", as ITDC officials describe it, they have presented three alternative plans to Devi Lal. The plans are: reducing the concessional offer to only one day of the week, restricting the rebate only to the Indian restaurants as villagers aren't expected to dig into steaks and sizzlers, and restricting the scheme to just one hotel in each city. Says an assistant manager: "This will help, especially in a place like Delhi where we have as many as eight ITDC hotels."

A senior ministry official has presented yet another proposal—these hotels should provide *thali* meals for the rural people. The ITDC management is hoping the *thali* scheme will appeal to the Tau. The idea is to duplicate the *thali* scheme the Haryana Government offered, after Devi Lal became chief minister in 1987, in a bid to open its resorts to one and all. The price of a *thali* comprising dal, sabzi, raita and rotis, under the earlier scheme: an affordable Rs 7.



However, the snags still remain. As ITDC officials say, there is a vast difference between a resort and a five-star hotel. For instance, in Delhi a plate of dal could be anywhere between Rs 35 and Rs 55, a chicken dish nothing less than Rs 80 and rotis no less than Rs 6 each. And these are just the coffee shop rates, the minimum available in hotels. Even after the discount the prices at the hotels will be astronomical. A plate of chicken will cost around Rs 65, even after the rebate, for, the ruralites will not be exempt from the 33-per cent luxury tax. And it's not just the cost of food. They'd have to spend money to drive into cities from villages. "Would villagers spend so much, in an environment totally alien to them just to shed their inferiority complex?" officials are already beginning to ask.

THE management's brows are also furrowed thinking about the loss in ambience at the hotels when the Tau's hastily-conceived scheme takes off. "People don't come here just to eat but for the atmosphere in the hotel," says a manager. Managements are wondering what they'll do if they drive up to the entrance in tractors or walk in with liquor bottles. As one assistant manager says: "We will have to treat them as esteemed guests as they'll be carrying the Tau tag. But what will we do if they misbehave with the other guests who will definitely be bothered about who is sitting next to them if they're paying as much as a thousand rupees for a meal."

And if the ambience is spoilt, ITDC officials feel they will lose their clientele too. At least on Thursdays and Fridays. Given the fact that they are already strapped for funds, they can hardly afford that. As it is ITDC hotels stand a poor second to their competitors. The scheme will only give a boost to the revenue of their competitors. Says a senior official: "We are not in the top rung. And from being first-class we will become middle level." Besides, it will be difficult to maintain a sharp vigil on lower level hotel staff. "What will we do if the staff takes a 10-per cent commission and passes off regular guests as ruralites?" asks a manager.

But Devi Lal remains unruffled by the reservations that the "unnecessarily worried" officials have been expressing. According to one of his aides ruralites are better behaved than urbanites. Says he: "They will come in saying namaste to everyone—the durban and the waiters. A villager understands what a *bhabhi* is and what a sister is. It is the urbanites who invite trouble by wearing mini-skirts and other provocative dresses."

Also, the managerial staff is worried there might be a change in its own dress code. There are indications that the Tau is in favour of lobby attendants, managers and assistant managers wearing dhoti kurtas or kurta pyjamas. Go rural is the theme—at least for the year 1991, which happens to be Visit India year. As an ITDC official puts it: "God help us. We don't know what is coming next."

That's not all. Devi Lal is in search of a bureaucrat with a rural background who he can appoint as the ITDC's managing director. Apparently, the Tau is also planning to extend the 50-per cent rebate to room rent. Says a Devi Lal aide: "Rooms are expensive, yes, but this way farmers will be introduced to the concept of having holidays. The ruralites will be able to visit cities and stay at hotels just as the urbanites go to Goa, Kulu or Manali."

Whether the room discount scheme works out or not, the restaurants are definitely being thrown open to the ruralites. As a ministry official says: "The I's are being dotted and the T's being crossed." Clearly, Devi Lal means business.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

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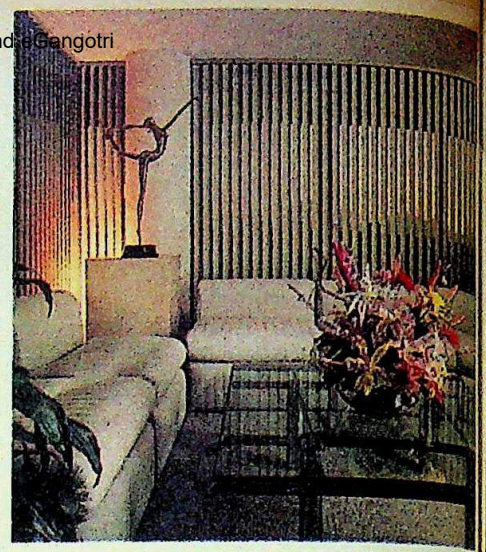

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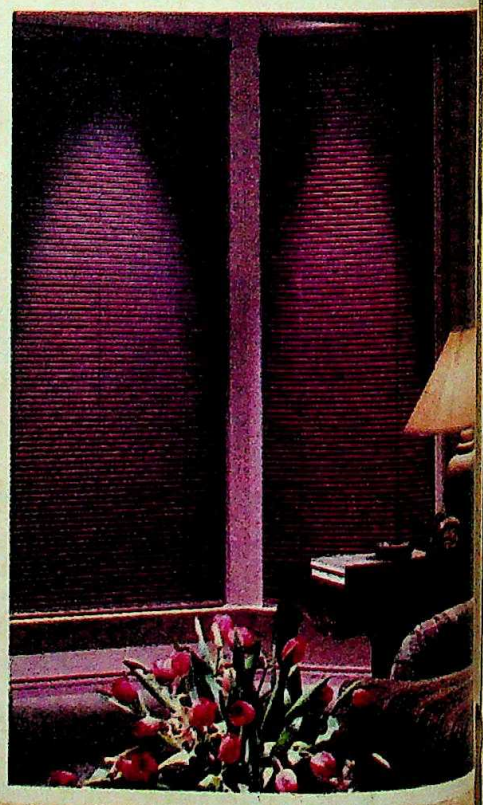

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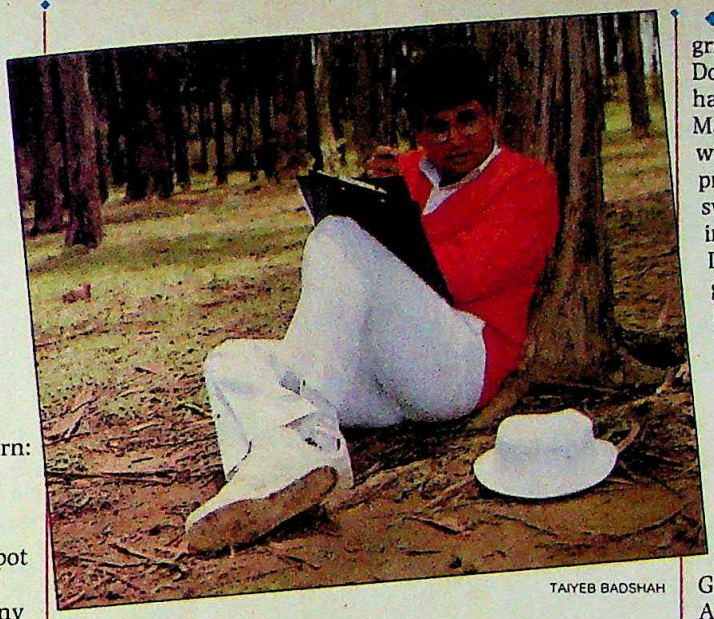
◆ Doordarshan has gone into fourth gear with programmes on communal harmony—its new one-point programme. Now, even movie tycoons will be making quickies—three-minute spots—on the subject. Subhash Ghai, Yash Chopra and Bappi Lahiri will get across the message of *Amar, Akbar, Antony* through popular film stars.

Communal harmony has really taken a star turn: in addition to these programmes, actors will spout dialogue on national integration in spot interviews. Behind this electronic rath to harmony is the Indian Film Industry Peace Committee set up last fortnight with G.P. Sippy as its convener and Shakti Samanta as its chairman.

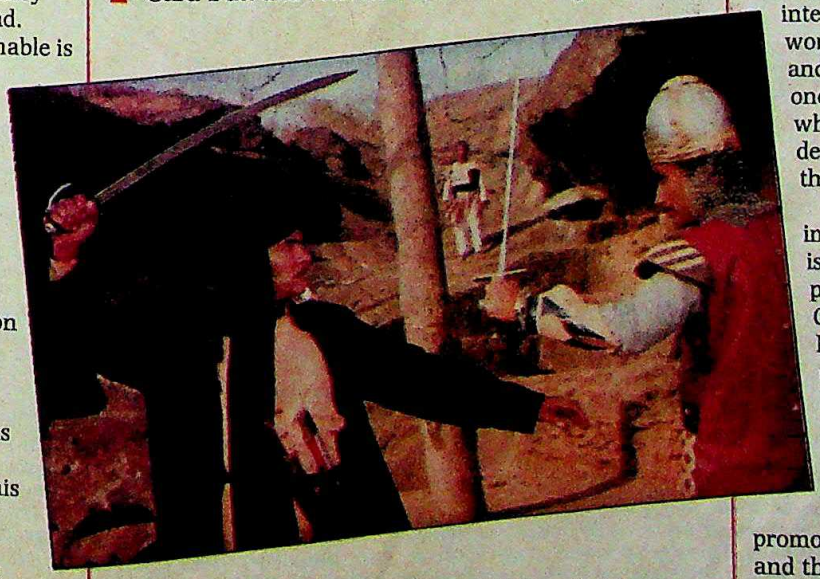
◆ For Hindi cinema, with love. Nasreen Munni Kabir's *Movie Mahal* series made for Channel 4 in England has finally made it to India. At least, the programme on Guru Dutt with its telling and moving insights into both his gifted but tortured mind as well as the way he made his films is here. In it, Waheeda Rahman talks about the time they first met in Hyderabad. What makes it watchable is the absence of any nagging, patronising commentary—even the director is invisible—and the anecdotes are told by his family and colleagues. Raj Khosla hits the nail on the head by explaining that the special quality of Guru Dutt's films was the fact that he captured on screen his personal dilemma of being able to love so deeply and yet being unable to say "I love you".



TAIYEB BADSHAH

▲ Subhash Ghai: star-studded integration

▲ Guru Dutt and Waheeda Rahman in *Kaagaz Ke Phool*



▲ Benjamin Gilani (left) as *Bhootnath*: magical fantasia

◆ With reality getting grimmer by the day, Doordarshan seems to have turned to fantasy. Magical whodunnits with enchanted palaces, pretty princesses and swashbuckling gallants are in. In fact, novelist Devaki Nandan Khatri's ghost seems to be hovering over Doordarshan. Manju Asrani has almost completed a serial based on his best seller *Bhootnath*. His other magnum opus *Chandrakanta*, will also be televised. The versatile Benjamin Gilani plays the lead role in Asrani's fantasy which has danseuse Sudha Chandran doing an erotic number. All's fair in love and fantasy.

◆ Kiran Bedi doesn't quite look herself without her usual accessories: a baton and a cane. But now she's armed with a camera. Whether it's a telefilm on the police or *Navjyoti*, the documentary for the drug de-addiction foundation she's just made for Delhi Police, Bedi's now into shooting the softer face of the police. Though a little humdrum, it does, however, have interesting footage: interviews with a woman drug-pusher and the mother of one of the patients who says that a dead son is better than a "druggie".

It seems like image improvement is the new preoccupation of the Government. Now, more and more ministries—such as environment, petroleum and health—are lobbying for TV advertising spots to promote social awareness and themselves.

—MADHU JAIN

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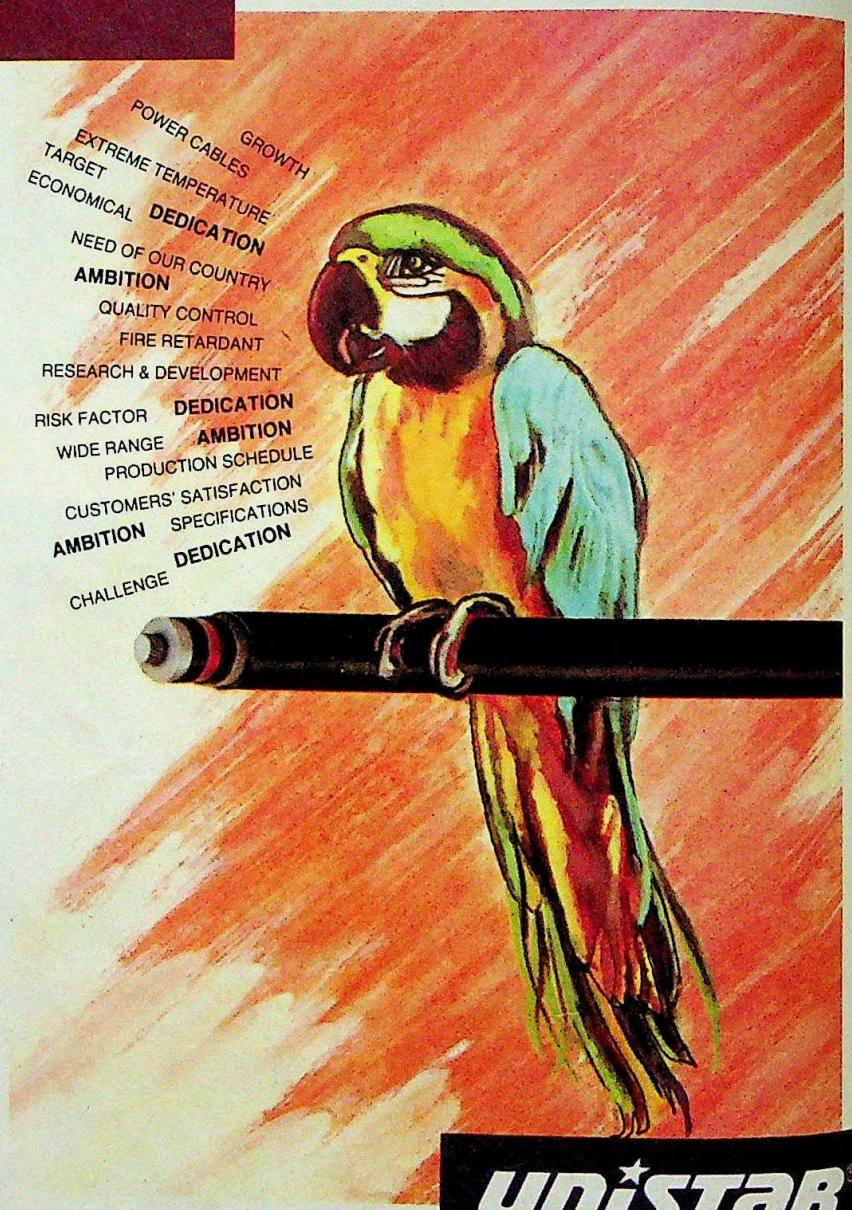

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ORISSA

Girl Goddess

Faith-healing mania set off

A swollen mass of humanity has been winding its way towards Parvatipur village in Puri district in Orissa every day for the past two months. Its destination is not a famous temple or a holy river but an eight-year-old girl who's assumed semi-divine status among the ill and the gullible. The crowds flock to Sabita Swain in the belief that her "supernatural healing powers" will cure them of all their ailments.

Some of them die before they can achieve their miracle cure. In scenes which have made the local police nervous, the roads leading to Parvatipur have been dangerously congested not only with people who have piled into buses, jeeps and autos, but also trekkers, making the healing journey. Sixteen have already died in road accidents. The death toll is actually quite low given that the state police intelligence wing estimate that around 20 lakh people have visited Parvatipur since October last year.

When they arrive in the village, nestling along the banks of the Bhargavi, and the time for darshan comes, a kind of mass delirium seizes the crowd. Sabita appears. Her "technique" is to look at the petitioner and blow into his or her face three times. This, apparently, is all it takes to effect a complete cure for asthma, depression, rheumatism, blindness, paralysis or gall stones.

While she is busy blowing, the crowd showers her with donations. Her father, Banamali Swain, laughs all the way to the bank. Rumour has it that he has put away over Rs 5 lakh in the local bank. He recently decided to streamline the family business. A more cost-effective "mass therapy" has been arranged. Sabita sits on a podium built specially for her on the banks of the river. Instead of blowing at individuals, she blows collectively at the sea of faces below. Volunteers, paid Rs 25 a day, scurry around collecting the cash.

Sabita's reputation for being a precocious thaumaturge began when a village boy cut his finger some months ago. The bleeding wouldn't stop. Banamali claims that this was the first time that his daughter blew three times at the boy and the finger immediately stopped bleeding. After another similar incident, the tales spread to neighbouring villages and a legend was born. The second standard schoolgirl became a "godchild" and people flocked to see her from as far as West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Their arrival disrupted the villagers' life totally, although some of them quickly grabbed the chance to make some money. Enterprising schoolteachers closed the village school and hastily put up make-shift, roadside hotels. When fears of an epidemic began to do the rounds, however, the police decided enough was enough. The state Chief Secretary, Ramakanta Mishra, imposed a ban on all visitors to Parvatipur, but it's only been semi-effective.

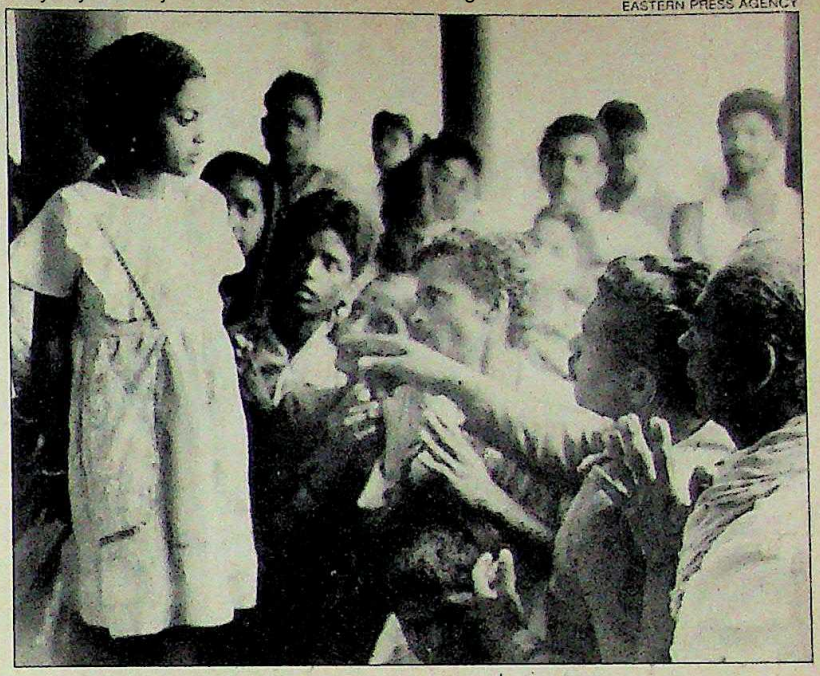
Medical experts are unanimous in dismissing Sabita's claims as a hoax. A medical team headed by the Puri district chief medical officer graced the village with a visit. They subsequently pronounced her to be a fraud.

Such is the faith in her, however, that state-run hospitals are suddenly finding they have free beds as patients discontinue their treatment and catch the first bus to Parvatipur instead. Sabita herself exudes confidence: "I can cure everyone. I do not know what power I possess but I know for certain that whoever comes to me will definitely be cured."

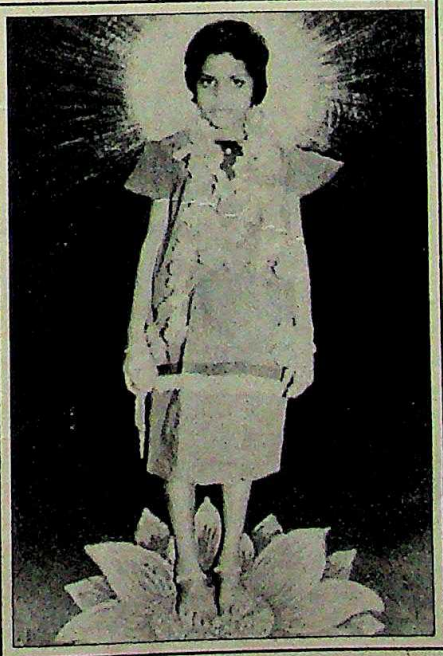
A press photographer decided to consult her about the migraine that was splitting his skull. Sabita obligingly blew at him three times. Nothing happened. The migraine got worse and the photographer resorted to pain killers. He left Sabita's home, profoundly unimpressed, but hundreds of other ailing people milled outside, impatiently waiting their turn to have an eight-year-old girl blow away their pains with her breath.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

EASTERN PRESS AGENCY



Sabita holds darshan



A poster of Sabita: God or fraud?

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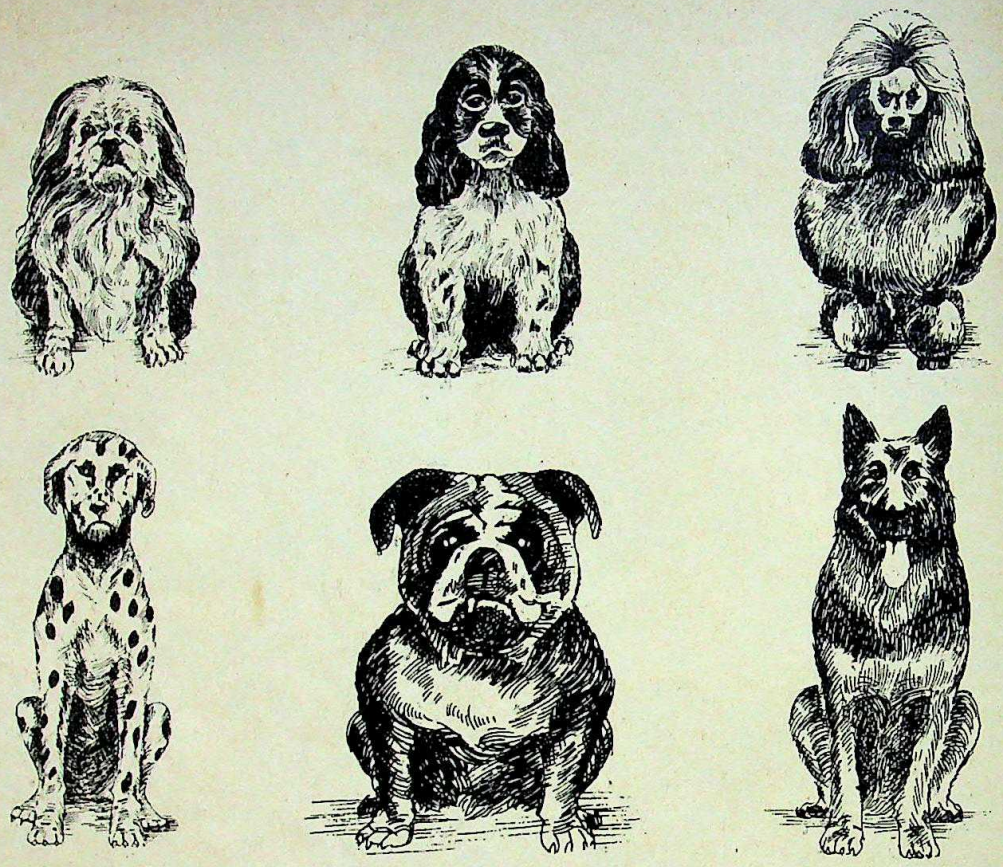

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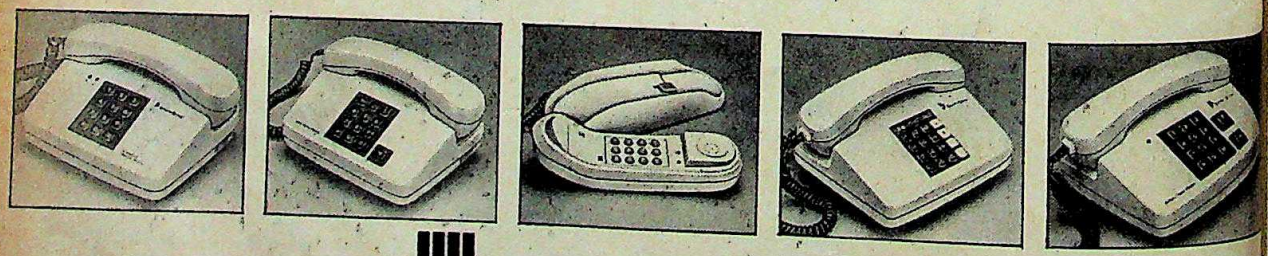

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Photographs by SHANKAR

KERALA

Dressing to Design

Fashion revolution is on

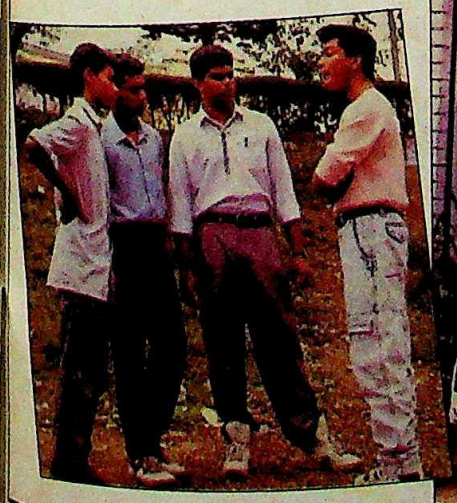
THE old fogies of Kerala are rolling their eyes in horror. Their daughters are folding away their sarees and pouring their flesh into figure-hugging jeans and skimpy T-shirts, cropping their hair, frittering away time in swank beauty parlours and even baring their thighs in mini-skirts no bigger than a tea cosy.

A fashion explosion is rocking the state. It seems the Malayalees are determined to shed their so-called reputation for being staid and prim. The initial engine of the fashion revolution was the money that was coming from earnings in the Gulf. The influx of ready cash spawned a class of nouveau riche who began to flaunt their style and trendiness. And now fashionable trends are the order of the day.

The salwar kameez—traditionally scorned by southern conservatives—has now become the most popular form of dress for Kerala teenagers. Ann Joseph, a zoology student, claims it's more a question of comfort than style. Says she: "We are not against sarees but a salwar kameez is definitely far more comfortable. What actually happens is that we go in for everything that's comfortable and suddenly it becomes the height of fashion!"

Male teenagers obviously have less to choose from but even they are making the most of a limited repertoire. Trousers have become baggy, shirts luridly colourful and belts are getting wider by the minute.

T-shirts in themselves have a limited potential for scandalising the older generation but the slogans on them however, more than compensate. Declares one: "I'm a sex education teacher—first lesson free." Another one that startled little old ladies in Trivandrum on their way to the temple for the *deeparadhana* boldly announces: "I have a massive problem. Will you handle it for me?"



Teenagers in stylish clothes: new consciousness

Shoes have acquired a crucial importance for the young male. The price-tags on some of them are high but there's no shortage of takers. A pair of Reeboks, for example, can cost anything over Rs 1,000. But P. Lalu, an English literature student, who paid the price willingly, explains: "Shoes are so damn important. It's the first thing girls look at."

Entrepreneurs in the fashion business are burgeoning so much that people are switching from other professions to fashion designing. Says Dr Shanta Kelath, who trained as an agricultural scientist but has switched her attention from pruning plants to paring hem-lines. "I have college girls coming in asking for designs to match the outfits they've seen actresses wearing in films. I have no regrets."

Although the fashion craze has offended the sensibilities of the elderly burghers of Kerala, nothing is likely to stem the avalanche of sartorial change. Yasmin Marikar, a biochemist, says a woman wearing trousers in Trivandrum 10 years ago would find herself sitting alone in a bus. Other women would refuse to sit by her. She also remembers when she had her hair cut. People would ask sarcastically whether she was recovering from a bout of typhoid. But now all this is commonplace. And Marikar is happy with the changes. The future, clearly, seems to belong to her and her ilk.

—RAMESH MENON

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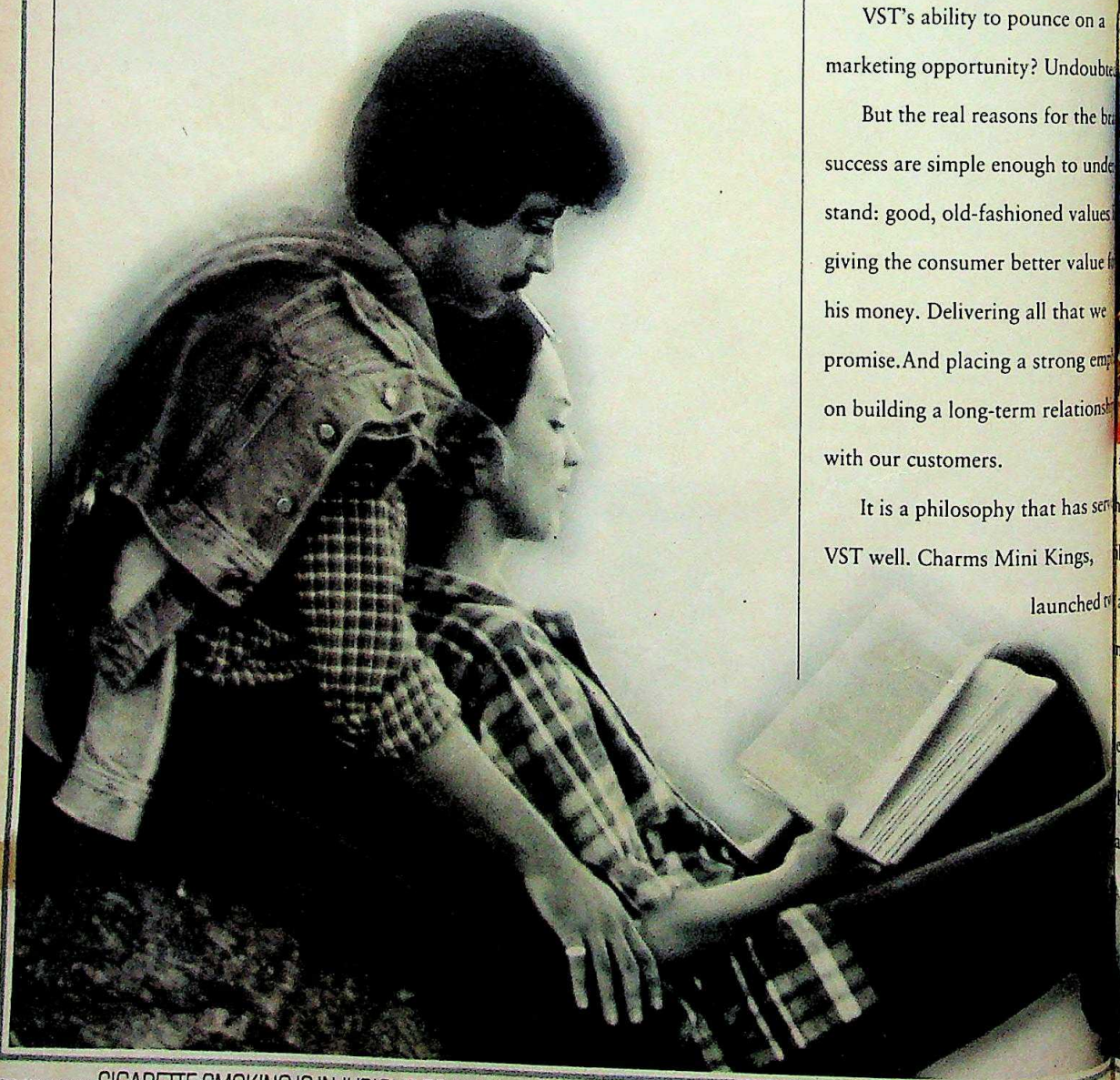

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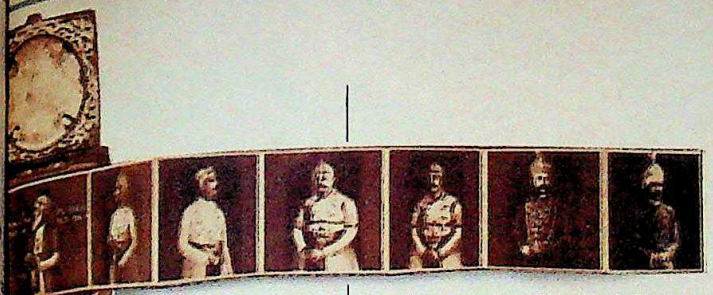

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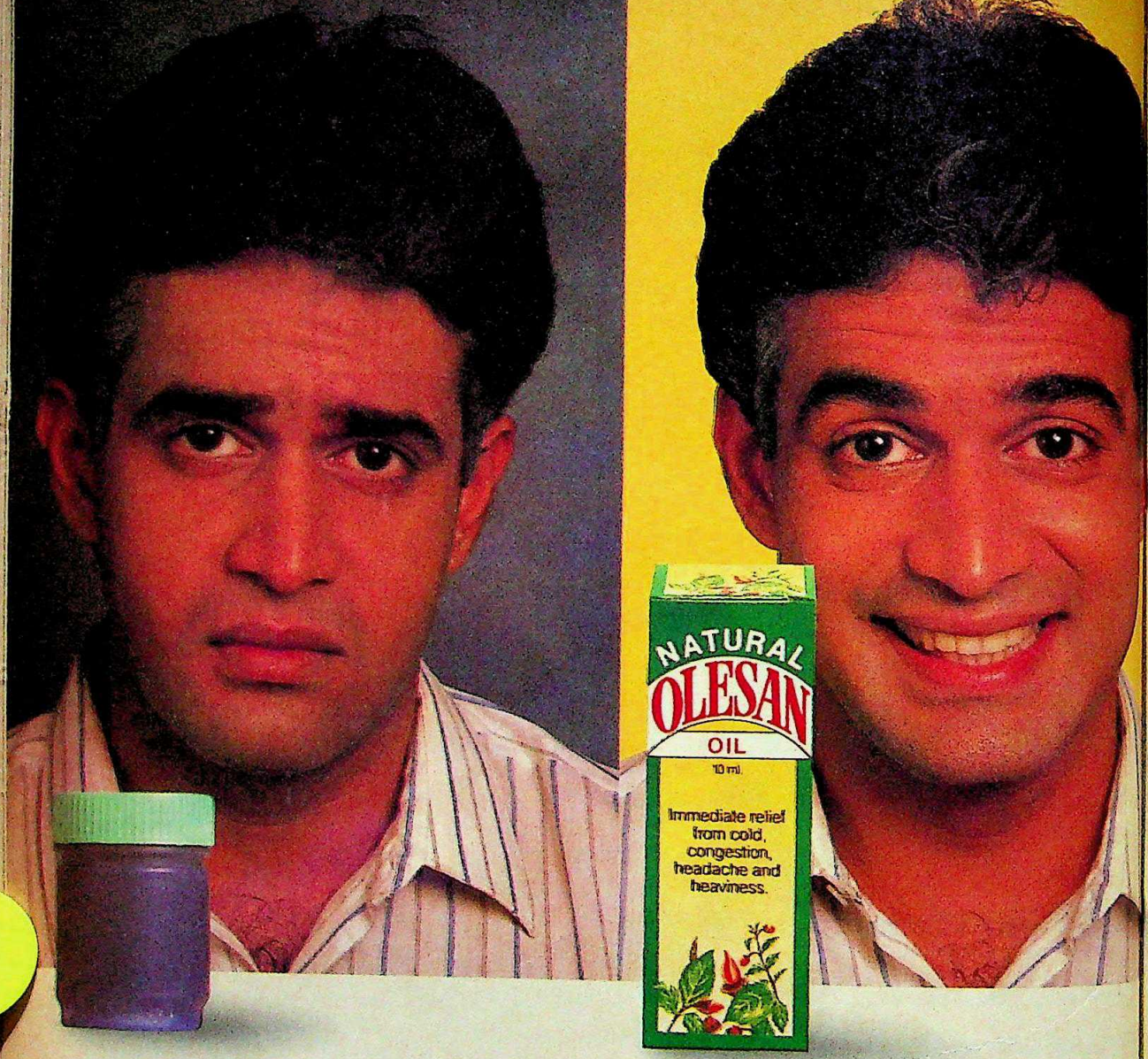
Old Relief

Cold Relief



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The Minimum Wages Mess

GRASS WITHOUT ROOTS

By BUNKER ROY

FROM September 1982 to July 1988 more than six judgements have been delivered by the Supreme Court and several high courts of this country on the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

Two Chief Justices, P.N. Bhagwati and R.S. Pathak, of the Supreme Court separately have said in their judgements that minimum wages is a fundamental right and non-payment will be considered forced labour (Article 23) and a violation of right to equality (Article 14).

Several judgements have said quite categorically that minimum wages are non-negotiable and no form of discrimination by way of exemptions or norms of measurements can be allowed. On these grounds the Famine Relief Act of the Government of Rajasthan (1964) was declared unconstitutional and the Government was directed to include famine relief works in the notification when minimum wages were fixed.

Regrettably these judgements have not gone far enough. It is the duty of experienced civil servants to see how they can circumvent the law without breaking it: how they can abide by court judgements without having to change the pattern of working in the village.

Famine relief works, judgements notwithstanding, are still exploitative, discriminatory, unequal and negotiable as ever. Why? Because the judgements are full of persisting loopholes which the Government has cashed in on and thereby continued its juvenile one-upmanship over the judiciary.

On the dubious grounds that resources are scarce and full wages mean that fewer people will get work, the bureaucracy (right up to the cabinet secretary, no less) believes that in times of famine and drought when the Government starts emergency work, the poor and the hungry should work for eight hours. But on no account should these unfortunate people be paid the minimum wages prescribed by law. They should share the minimum wage with others who sit idle or those who do not come to do manual labour at all.

No judgement has clearly stated that the Government must fix either a minimum time rate or a minimum piece rate. It should not and indeed must not be both because experience has shown that no poor, hungry worker can ever earn the minimum wage prescribed by the state. Whenever there is scope for manipulating the attendance and also the measurements, the poor can be guaranteed to lose—always.

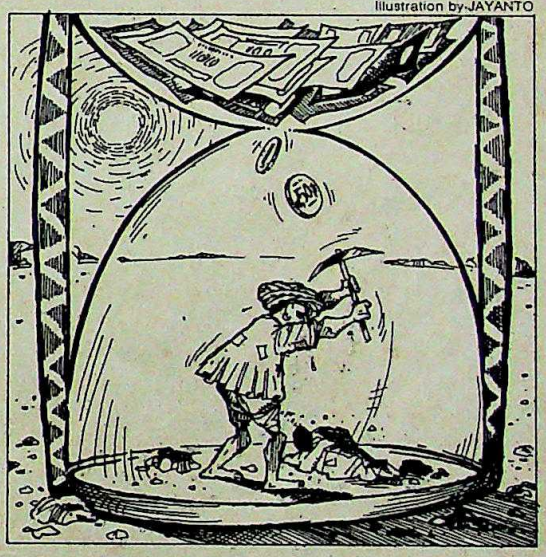
No judgement has clearly stated that famine relief work must always be listed every time a notification is issued when new minimum wages are fixed. Nor has any judgement gone on to state that a failure to do so is contempt of court.

In the absence of such directions when the minimum wage has been fixed as Rs 22 a day in Rajasthan, the Government is still paying the old rate of Rs 14 under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana of the Department of Rural Development. Strictly speaking, legally and technically, they have not broken the law because in the July 1990 notification famine relief work was left out of the list.

What has been classified as minimum wage is actually a maximum wage. Even if a famine relief labourer works eight hours and does more work than he or she is expected to do per day he cannot earn more than Rs 22 a day. If the letter of the law is not being broken, the spirit certainly is.

The general impression that everyone is lazy and a cheat when it comes to wages in Rajasthan is strengthened by the fact that there is not one person on record who has ever received more than minimum wages since 1964 when the Government started violating the Minimum Wages Act legally.

Illustration by JAYANTO



If some laws cannot be implemented scrap them. Start with the Minimum Wages Act. Sounds ridiculous, then so is the way it is being enforced.

The Government is the worst breaker of its own laws. It should not require voluntary groups in villages and slums to reveal and publicise this elementary fact. In international forums, such groups easily expose the Government and its practices to ridicule over its claims that there is no exploitation of or discrimination against the poor in rural India.

The time for straight thinking and straight talking is long overdue. If there are some laws that just cannot be implemented then let us be honest and say so. Scrapping the Minimum Wages Act would be a good start. If this sounds ridiculous then the way it is being enforced is equally farcical and should make every decent human being hang his head in shame.

The author is Director, The Social Work & Research Centre, Tilonia, Rajasthan

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ORISSA

Porn Proliferation

Smutty magazines flood the market

THE young man in a grubby safari suit seems to be in a terrible hurry. He throws a few furtive glances around and flips through a pile of smutty periodicals at the ramshackle roadside bookstall. Pocketing one, he pays silently and rushes off.

This has become a regular sight at pavement stalls in towns across Orissa, for suddenly there seems to be a deluge of semi-pornographic magazines. They have suggestive if not outright lurid titles like *Kemit Koribi* (How to do it), *Kaamagni* (Fire of passion), *Mastaram* (Hedonist), and the contents live up to the titles: the mandatory account of an anonymous author's *suhaag raat* (wedding night), lessons in kissing and how to prolong the pleasure of love-making. Invariably the write-ups are peppered with passages of explicit sex and nude pictures, albeit of poor quality. The latest issue of *Deha Mana Ananga Ranga* (Many hues of body and mind) carries a long-winding *prema patra* (love letter) written by one Premdas on a "sultry, passionate night". Some stories are further woven around an illicit affair or rape, giving an excuse to add the blood-and-gore ingredient.

As puritans wring their hands in despair, the number of such periodicals mostly published from Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Berhampore has shot up to 35. Being fly-by-night operations, many of these fold up after a few issues, only to make way for newer and more lewd ones. Selling on an average at Rs 6 in the book or tabloid format, they have already expropriated a combined sales of nearly 1.5 lakh copies, while in low-literacy Orissa, circulation of even mainline newspapers adds up to a ridiculously low two lakhs. The top-selling porn magazines include *Kaamna* (Desire: 25,000 copies), *Kaamagni* (20,000) and *Ananga Ranga* (17,000). There were a few such magazines marketed clandestinely even before but today inhibitions have been shed and even porn novels are making an appearance.

Most of the operations are still small but a big baron is J. Mohapatra who closed down his English daily *News of the World*, published from Cuttack, to jump on the sex-magazine bandwagon. Equipped with a modern press, he introduced better production qualities with his *Ananga Ranga* and *Kaamna*. His former manager, M. Rahman, has replicated his steamy success with Patrika Press and publishes three magazines including the high-selling *Nuta Jauban* (New youth).

Photographs by Eastern Press Agency

The magazines have lurid titles, nude pictures and passages of explicit sex.

Both Mohapatra and Rahman are about to enlarge their smut stables.

The precursor to the current pulp boom was also an English tabloid, *Tuesday*. Run by Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, press baron and son-in-law of former chief minister J.B. Patnaik, it packed in stories of rape, murder and sex, and was a runaway hit, even spawning a clone, *Friday*. Both had to fold up for various reasons.

The current blitzkrieg has the litterateurs and sociologists worried. Rues M. Nilamani Sahoo, former president of the state Sahitya Akademi: "Serious literature has lost its relevance. It has no impact on society any more." Warns Ra Ray, reader in the sociology department of Utk University: "Porn purveyors would not stop at reading, the are being egged on into sexu adventures." That in a tradition Oriya society may lead to perversion and sex crimes.

A prophecy which is hotly disputed by the people of Mohapatra's ilk. Say he: "Our publications are not porn b provide sex education." Adds a defian Prasanta Sennapati of the Patrik Press: "Who says something that popular is not good literature." Som even nurse the delusion that they a inculcating the reading habit amon the masses. Claims a Berhampore based smut publisher: "We have ch sen to leave the ivory towers to cater the lowly and the ordinary."

Indeed, quite a fe are making the com down. Today, the Bhub neswar-based agent for th Indian Express group newspapers has no qual in turning distributor for th porn presses. A popula writer like Bhagirati Das no churns out articles like "Wh is the wife of my husband Novels like *Pirti Patho Khash* (The love spot is slippery) a coming from the mainstrea publishing houses. With pu lishers distancing themselv from serious books, the pitch being queered for writers. For warns Santanu Acharya, the registr of the Utkal University: "A decade fro now, writers may woefully suffer f want of publishers."

Under the circumstances, who left to guard the morals? The police worst are an accomplice, and at be they conduct cosmetic raids. For e ample, last August the Patrika pr mises were raided and Rahman a rested. But once out on bail, he we back to steering his lucrative busine Irritated, the IGP (crime) A.B. Tripat is now looking into the statute book seal the recalcitrant presses forev "The remedy needs to be sociologic policing cannot be an answer," h cautions. With the social crusade and guardians of people's morals ma ing no headway in their attempt clean up the bookstalls, the porn boo is likely to continue.—RUBEN BANER

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Leftist Lore

Debut novel fails to impress

REDEMPTION
by TARIQ ALI
Chatto and Windus
Price: Rs 490; Pages: 280

SOMEHOW, a feeling of exhaustion washes over the reader after turning the last page of Tariq Ali's maiden novel, *Redemption*. It's like having gone to a talk-shop party in which the conversation—no doubt kept going by good wine—never ends and the witticisms and clever one-liners drop from lips as easily as leaves from trees in autumn.

The trouble with this book is that it is like a play for which Ali has assembled a well-assorted cast of characters. But they just haven't got their act together—literally. Characters in search of a story, they are mere sketches which do not flesh out into portraits. Nor do they relate with one another. But free float, cushioned by their own hot-air words.

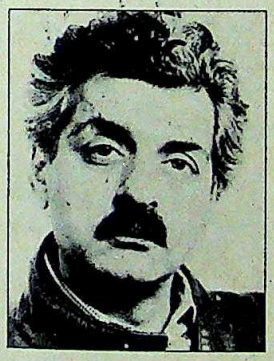
Certainly, the long list of *dramatis personnae* is fascinating, often quite grotesque; like the 89-year-old Trotsykite and chief recruiter of the movement, Frankie Hood, who literally dies on his Christmas present—an 18-year-old Patagonian "waif"—and is later secretly embalmed by his admirers, a famous opera diva and her sister.

The London-based Pakistani writer's inside knowledge of the Trotskyites and his involvement with the 1968 revolution which swept through Europe has come in handy. So has his having been a fellow traveller with the heroes of '68 from Regis Debray to the Cohn-Bendits. He even joined Bertrand Russell on his historic protest campaign-voyage to Vietnam.

Thus, this is not a peep-hole view into the presently perturbed world of the Left—rather, existing anachronisms of the broad European left: the militant tendency, die-hard Stalinists, the Trots and fringe groups of the French Communist Party. And yes, the Trans-Atlantic hardliners like the fictional character Jim Noble who, swimming against the tide, suddenly discover their love for Fidel Castro.

Nor could this *roman a clef* of sorts have been more timely. The aftermath of the events in East Europe and the Soviet Union has turned the world topsy-turvy for the Left and triggered a bout of soul-searching and some serious navel-gazing amongst them. The world according to Marx led many into an impasse, even launched some on a search for alternative brave worlds: Even religion snaked into the Eden of the Left: religion was no longer a strange bed fellow for the Marxists.

But then, perhaps the fault of the novel may just be that the book is too timely. Events almost hot off the press have been fictionalised. The novel begins with its main protagonist "rootless cosmopolitan" Ezra Einstein who, after watching Romanian soldiers crossing themselves before they execute Ceausescu and his wife Elena on television on Christmas Day, 1989, decides to call an Emergency World Congress in Paris to discuss how to respond to what is happening in East Europe and in the Soviet Union.



Tariq Ali: disappointing effort

Then, like one of those clever thriller films, the novels zips to various places (Central Park, New York with its trendy jogging veteran Lefties, the Mid-west, Canada, London, Paris, Geneva) and shows the reaction of veterans, militants and renegades of the movement to the forthcoming Congress and the tricks they have up their sleeve for it. But of course, the leader, Einstein, in his 70s and buoyed by the forthcoming arrival of his child by his young and beautiful wife Maya (the child ought to have been called Mao Einstein but post-Tiananmen that's not on and Ho Einstein is the "compromise") has quite a heretic pulling-the-world-from-right-under proposition which will baffle them all. Saying more would be telling.

Needless to say, Ali must have had a lot of fun writing the book: he sends them all up, and there are many party jokes. Unfortunately, most of them are in-jokes which anyone who hasn't been to the party wouldn't understand.

—MADHU JAIN

Seminal Study

Meticulous, if drab work

BROTHERS AGAINST THE RAJ
A Biography of Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose
by LEONARD A. GORDON
Viking
Price: Rs 395; Pages: 807

IN the early light of post-Marxist dawn, one has the temerity to assert that history has its heroes and villains apart from the impersonal movements let loose by changes in the modes of production. To recognise the heroic figures does not imply hero-worship, nor to know the villains leads to demonologies. That is, where scholarship is the ruling spirit. Leonard A. Gordon's biography of the charismatic Subhas Chandra Bose is a scholarly portrayal of the hero.

In the popular imagination Subhas had assumed almost a mythic status, rivalling even that of Mahatma Gandhi. As the man who challenged Gandhi and defeated the Mahatma's nominee Pattabhi Sitaramayya in the Congress presidential election in 1939, and who waged India's battle for freedom abroad, Subhas was the embodiment of the romantic revolutionary.

Historians of the freedom movement in India are as yet hesitant to take a critical stance. Gordon's—an American scholar in Indian studies—book is the first scholarly attempt to understand Subhas' complex political thinking, and the career directed by that thinking. Though his use of psychobiography and cultural anthropology to explain Bengali nationalism and the politics of Subhas and his elder brother Sarat seems facile at times, Gordon has diligently reconstructed the life histories of the brothers. Quite a number of startling facts, and clarification of things already known is the contribution of this seminal biography.

Subhas' political personality contained apparent contradictions, and it is no easy task for a scholar to characterise him safely as one could Nehru—an agnostic, a socialist, a secularist, and one who believed in the scientific temper. Subhas was

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intensely religious in a very Hindu way. He ardently believed in socialism and in Hindu-Muslim unity.

Subhas' commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity was an intrinsic part of his nationalistic vision. As the chief executive officer of the Calcutta Corporation in 1924, he appointed a large number of Muslims to the jobs, and was accused by the Hindu members of partisanship. Subhas hit back with a powerful reply, saying that even though it would cause heartburn to Hindu candidates, the claims of different sections of the people have to be taken into consideration. Even Gandhi came to the defence of Subhas in *Young India*.

But that was not all. Subhas picked on socialism as the answer to India's political needs, but it was quite different from the Fabian variety imbued by Nehru. He went through a dangerous phase when he wrote as late as in 1934: "One is inclined to hold that the next phase in world history will produce a synthesis between Communism and Fascism. And will it be a surprise if that synthesis is produced in India?" Gordon does not refrain from raising the moral question: "Did he believe that the positive lesson of these regimes (Germany, Italy) could be separated out from the bestialities and transferred to India?"

Bose with Gandhi: complex beliefs

However, Subhas soon retracted and admitted to Rajni Palme Dutt, the British Communist Party leader, in 1938 that the expression he used was not a happy one.

Gordon's narrative fails to rise above the humdrum of a diligent chronicle, except at two places, where the reader is moved to tears. One is the graphic reconstruction of Subhas' last moments after the crash, and the other one is the encounter between Sarat and Subhas' Austrian wife Emilie Schenkl after the war.

With a blunt and emotional temper Subhas confronted fearlessly Mahatma Gandhi, and even Rabindranath Tagore, impressed unsympathetic Germans and Japanese, and all those who came in touch with him. The Japanese army officers who worked with him saw their own samurai spirit reflected in the fearless Indian nationalist.

Sarat, the elder brother, was a political and emotional anchor for Subhas. A liberal who believed in socialism, he made vain efforts to preserve the unity of Bengal in the face of the tragic reality of Partition.

Gordon has accomplished a difficult task of presenting the political lives of the Bose brothers, who were Bengalis and nationalists, religious Hindus and secularists in a forthright spirit, a spirit that has disappeared completely from public life in the country.

—PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO

PUBLISHING

Going Green

A spurt in ecology books

THE irony couldn't be more striking. Even as environmentalists are crying themselves hoarse against the increased felling of trees, more and more trees are being destroyed to produce paper for books on environment. With the gradual greening of Indian publishing there has been a recent spurt in environment-friendly literature in the market.

Cashing in on the boom in ecological publishing have been some mainstream publishers like Oxford University Press and Rupa. Oxford released the famous Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* in India which sold 3,000 copies. Two years ago Rupa brought out Maneka Gandhi's *Animal Quiz* and *Brahma's Hair* (a book on trees in Indian mythology)—which sold 10,000 and 5,000 copies respectively. Says Tejeshwar Singh of Sage publishing: "Society has been sensitised to green issues."

The initial success has made publishers more ambitious. Oxford now plans to release a volume titled *History of Ecology* by environmentalist-scientist Madhav Gadgil and ecological historian Ramchandra Guha, having already published Guha's *The Unquiet Woods*. Moreover, it has even commissioned an *Ecological Atlas of India*. And Rupa will bring out an *Environmental Quiz* by science writer Dilip Salwi and a series on nature by artist Bulbul Sharma.

One problem is that of distribution. As many bookstores relegate these books to the top shelves, the casual buyer doesn't get to see them. So, publishers are forced to rely on direct mail. Says Tejeshwar Singh: "The books would sell a lot more if they were displayed better."

Some of the best work in green publishing has been done by the non-government organisations. For instance, the Centre for Science and Environment's two citizens' reports on the state of India's environment which sold 7,000 copies and about 12,000 copies respectively.

Even the regional languages have been smitten by the environmentalist bug. Some notable efforts: *Status of Environment in Andhra Pradesh* in Telugu brought out by the Academy of Gandhian Studies and *Jab Nadi Bandhi* in Hindi, a study on dams published by the Jaya Prabha Adhyayan Evam Anusandhan Kendra in Bihar.

Though there may not be a deluge of books on environment as yet, the casual buyer now has more than just the occasional Salim Ali volume or Jim Corbett reader to look for.

—ALOK TIWARI

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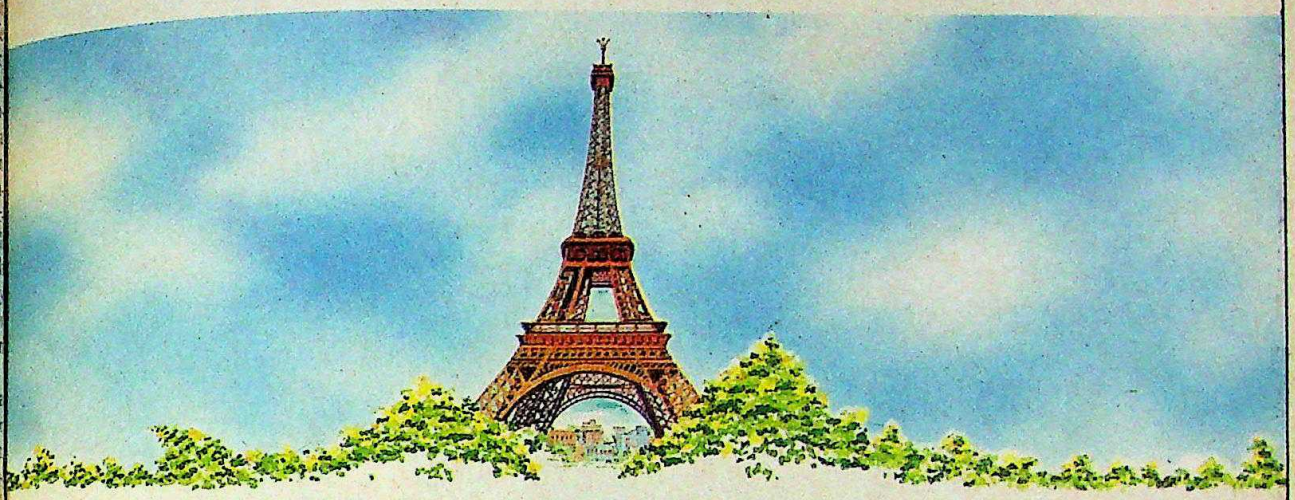

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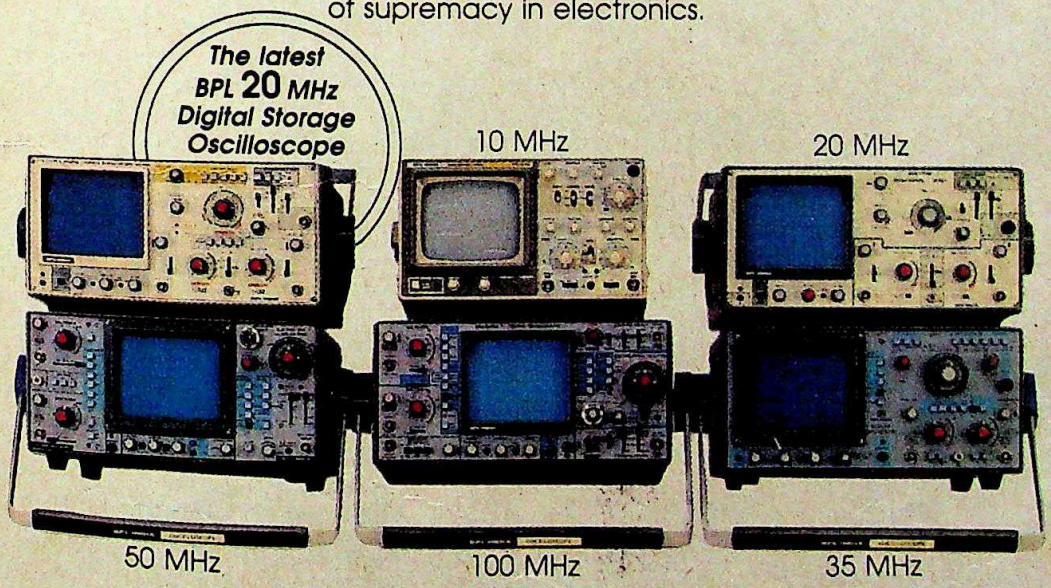

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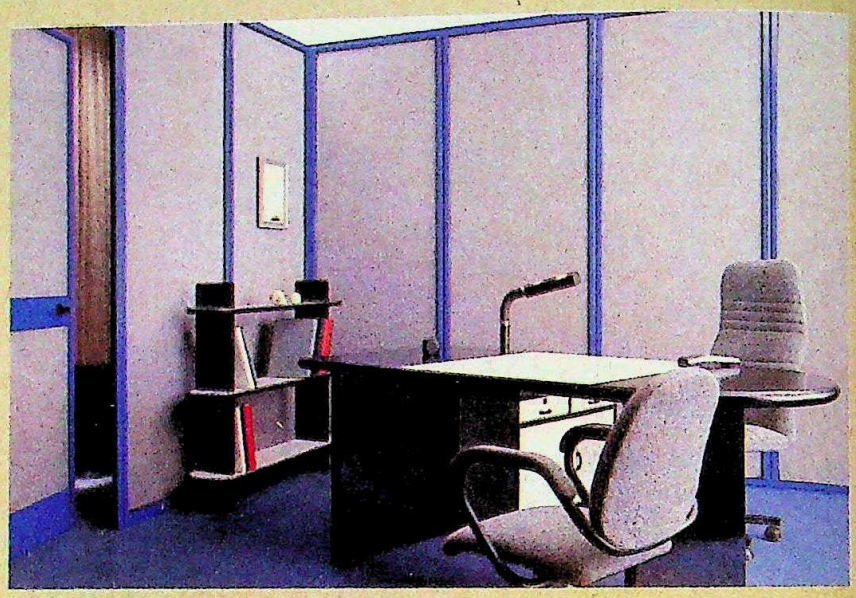
My boss threw me out of his office!



I guess it was difficult not to spill over into each others' offices.

Every time I had a few guests, we'd find ourselves in my boss' office (or the area demarcated as his office).

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Theatre

M. BUTTERFLY (written by David Hwang; Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta). The stereotype of the passive Oriental lass pining away for a Caucasian clod is upturned in this watchable production of *Madame But-*

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

M. Butterfly: worth a watch

terfly as Darius Taraporvala and Heng Ali Jin play the bumbling French diplomat and the Chinese spy.

Books

AMONGST WOMEN (by John McGahern; Faber and Faber; Rs 79). Revolutionaries never manage to come to terms with themselves. So Moran, former guerrilla leader in the Irish war of independence, continues to remain at odds with his family and friends in this first-rate novel, which is reminiscent in its lyrical cadences and its meticulous treatment of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day*.

DEATH OF A HARVARD MAN (Granta 34; Rs 212). Besides some fine pieces by Simon Schama, William Boyd, Martin Amis and Perene Hodson, this volume has a finely wrought piece by Amitav Ghosh that dwells on the spectre of the Iraq-US war that looms over the Arab world. Shows how a top-notch writer can convey more in 20 pages than stacks of statistics and journalese.

Art

ARPITA SINGH (Art Heritage, New Delhi). Delightfully playful at first glance, drawings with their toy-like aircraft and buses, interspersed with quotidian scenes; reflect the grim realities of modern India. Especially notable is the new world Arpita has created, one which has no echoes of any other work. Particularly fetching are *Man Sitting on the Bench, Ayesha, Ayesha* and *Woman with Fan*. The playful, *naif* quality of the drawings doesn't disguise the painter's meticulous craftsmanship.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Man on the Bench: another world

KALA (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi). This is one exhibition you don't see; you feel it. Housed in a specially-built stupa-like mud structure, it is a journey into time: from a state of timelessness—*Hrdya*—to a state of transcendence—*Kala-Sunya, Purna*. The highlight is a powerful audio-visual on creation, or *Srsti*, but the *coup de grace* is the empty dome lit in the centre and radiating a blue vibration—the Great Centre of Timelessness. If the concept was abstract, the design was clarity itself.

P.A. DHOND (Artists' Centre Gallery, Bombay). Monsoon clouds, sailboats, fisherwomen silhouetted on the beach—the Konkan coast comes alive in Dhond's charming watercolours. Creating a colour wash effect on handmade paper, the 82-year-old art teacher, in only his fourth one-man show, brings out his lifelong fascination with the picturesque coastal region of Maharashtra in 44 evocative seascapes and landscapes. The show was the first among a series on veteran painters sponsored by the Artists' Centre.

WALTER EMILIO D'SOUZA (Centre for Contemporary Art, New Delhi). These lithographs are almost Victorian in both their design and execution. There is an element of the aesthetic windbag in the man, a mixed potage of overstatement and indiscretion. "My images," D'Souza declares, "attempt at expressing a holistic understanding and universal concern of human predicaments." Well, it's not easily discernible in any of the works exhibited.

Movies

THE 22ND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA (Madras). The highlights of the 10-day non-competitive festival which was inaugurated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi on January 10 are the Indian panorama films, the mainstream cinema section and the Indian retrospective. There is a separate section of outstanding Tamil films. In the main international freebie are films like Bernado Bertolucci's *The Sheltering Sky* and Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*. Also of no mean interest is the early masters category, which features eight of David Lean's seminal films. On the agenda is a foreign retrospective and a special focus on South Korea.

Music

ONE INDIA SHOW (by Ravi Shankar and the Dynasty Culture Club, Bombay). Much song and dance to spread the message of national unity. Fashioned by Ravi Shankar, it will have an Indian orchestra and the Paranjoti Choir singing *Swagatam*. Then, Kathak, Kathakali, Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi will follow, along with a *tillana* from Ravi Shankar's ballet *Ghanashyam*. The finale will have a new piece, called *Saare Jahaan Se Achchha*, which the sitar maestro will perform with his disciples.

Food

HYDERABADI FOOD FESTIVAL (Trivandrum). Running into four days at the Government-run Mascot Hotel and organised by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation, the festival received a lukewarm response. The organisers blamed it on the festival season—"everyone was on holiday"—and added in tearful hindsight that the food was too spicy for tender Malayalee palates.

Odd ends

CAR SHOW (Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation and the Vintage and Classic Car Club of India). Over 30 cars from seven collectors were on show. The stars: Pranlal Bhogilal's vintage Rolls Royces and Vijay Mallya's 1931 Pierce Arrow.

Vintage car exhibition

HEMANT PITHWA

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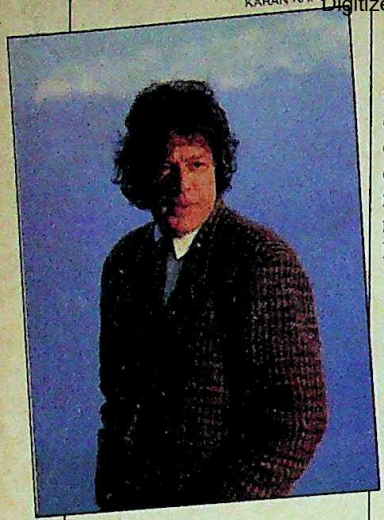
KARAN KAPOOR



Stoppard: journeying back

Nostalgia Trip

◆ Finally, they found it. The house that Tom lived in. British writer Tom Stoppard, 53, in India location-hunting for a film based on his play *In The Native State*, detoured on a nostalgia trip to Darjeeling. There he found Struan Lodge where he had lived as a child. India's been on his mind even when he was on the *Rosencratz and Guildernstern* trail or writing the screen play for *Russia House*. "I would have come back to this country even if I hadn't been invited," said Stoppard, who's attending the Madras Film Festival.

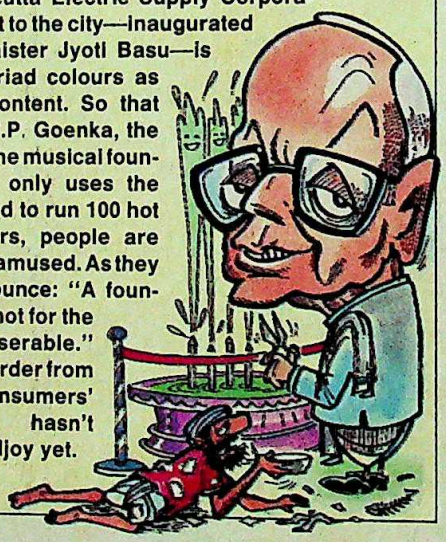
Monumental Feat

◆ The *Guinness Book of Records* may soon need to have a separate section exclusively for Indians. The latest Indian to make it to the book is 22-year-old **Kolluru Lakshmi Narayanamma** from Vishakhapatnam. Her achievement: she wrote shlokas from the Bhagwad Gita non-stop for 26 hours. What is more remarkable about it is that the writing was done in Braille script as Kolluru is blind. She achieved the monumental feat on the occasion of Louis Braille's 192nd birthday. However, she isn't going to stop at just that. Now that she has started, she is planning to complete the entire Bhagwad Gita in Bra by March this year. If there are more such books, "no one can call those who cannot blind". Certainly, this is quite a vision.

Kolluru Lakshmi Narayanamma: kudo

Fountain of Discontent

◆ **Nobody's going to throw coins into this Fountain of Joy. Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation's new gift to the city—inaugurated by Chief Minister Jyoti Basu—is spouting myriad colours as well as discontent. So that even when R.P. Goenka, the man behind the musical fountain, says it only uses the power needed to run 100 hot water geysers, people are certainly not amused. As they grimly pronounce: "A fountain of joy is not for the city of the miserable." But the stay order from the State Consumers' Commission hasn't become a killjoy yet.**



Cartoon by JAYANTO

Sensitive Portray

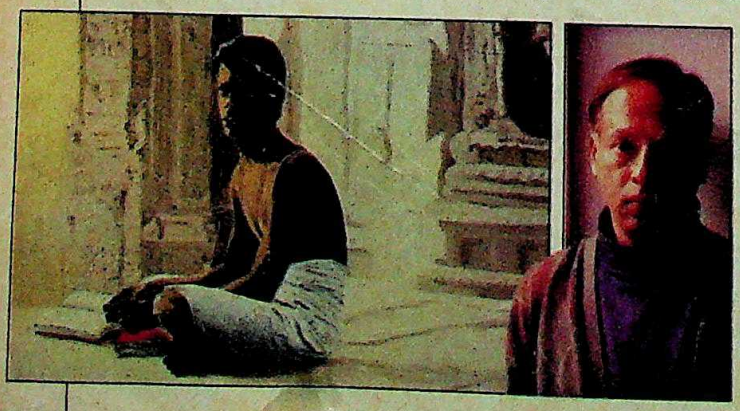
◆ Cinema seems hit by ghetto syndrome. First Meera Nair's latest *sala Mississippi Masala*. And Deepa Mehta's *Sam and Me* whacky film about an Ind in Canada with Ra Chowdhry playing the role. He's also been *Lonely America*, a film by No American cineaste Ba Brown. Chowdhry—wh tousled locks once set ma hearts aflutter—doesn't act but dons the garb script-writer as well. Says "It was a fabulous exp ence as I felt I kinda wrote role for myself. Though was a difficult job as I ha change caps very fast." G en his poignant performa as a 25-year-old Indian his relationship with a year-old Jewish man, he juggled roles rather deft

Chowdhry: deft handlin

YASHBANT SINGH NEGI

Rare Honour

◆ Madhur Kapoor's going to be hanging out with the immortals. His almost hyper-real canvas, *Thanjavur Priest*, is up for auction in Hong Kong, along with the works of Picasso, Chagal, Dufy and Henry Moore—and 40 other living painters. The World Wildlife Fund—under the patronage of Prince Phillip—is putting these *oeuvres d'art* under the hammer to raise funds to save the environment. Art for the rhino's sake. Thrilled by the honour, Kapoor says: "We are all guilty of eco-cide." He has plenty of reason to be happy: the estimated price for his *Priest* is between $45,000 and $70,000. Husain, watch out.



Kapoor (right); and *Thanjavur Priest*

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INDIA TODAY
FEBRUARY 15, 1991

RAJIV GANDHI

CONGRESS(I): RAJIV'S REVENGE
DMK: HITTING BACK
SERVANTS: CHANGING STATUS

GULF WAR

CRITICAL PHASE

ON THE SPOT REPORT FROM THE MIDDLE-EAST
ANGER IN ISRAEL ★ VIEW FROM THE US
HENRY KISSINGER ON THE FUTURE
GENERAL SUNDARJI ON MILITARY STRATEGY
INDIAN ECONOMY: TIMELY JOLT

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GULF WAR

CRITICAL PHASE

Critical Phase

The imponderables in the Gulf war continue to grow as the fighting escalates giving the lie to all the facile pre-battle assumptions. Not only will the toll in men and material be awesome, but even the ecological, economic and political fall-out of the war threaten to be cataclysmic.

COVER STORY 22

Thank You, Saddam

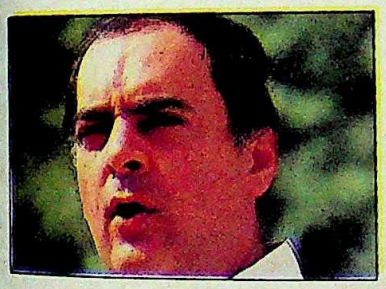
The war has flattened profit curves of petroleum-dependent industries and has adversely affected import-intensive manufacturing sectors. All this and growing external debts have forced the Government to start on a belated, drastic cleaning up job on the domestic economic front.

COVER STORY 40

Objects and Options

General K. Sundarji gives an overview of the strategy of the US-led coalition forces and Iraq. Henry Kissinger analyses the post-war options for the US and argues that Iraq should not be fully decimated lest other leaders in the desert get ideas and suggests how Israel could be accepted by the Arabs.

COVER STORY 45



Rajiv's Revenge

The Congress(I) President appears to have succeeded in clipping the wings of all those regional satraps who were beginning to defy his authority. The first to be subdued were Veerendra Patil and Chenna Reddy. And last fortnight it was the turn of N.D. Tiwari and Sharad Pawar to eat humble pie.

SPECIAL REPORT 60

Fighting Back

While the prime minister has eased the pressure on the DMK Government, the Congress(I)-AIADMK combine continue to press for its dismissal, ostensibly for harbouring LTTE and ULFA terrorists in Tamil Nadu. But Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi is not fazed and is fighting back.

SPECIAL REPORT 57

Changing Status

With the growth of awareness and job opportunities the old class of servants has all but disappeared. As the traditionally servile Ramu Kaka is relegated to cinematic mythology, there is a new type of domestic servant: no nonsense, more organised, ambitious, and fond of modern trappings.

SPECIAL FEATURE 142

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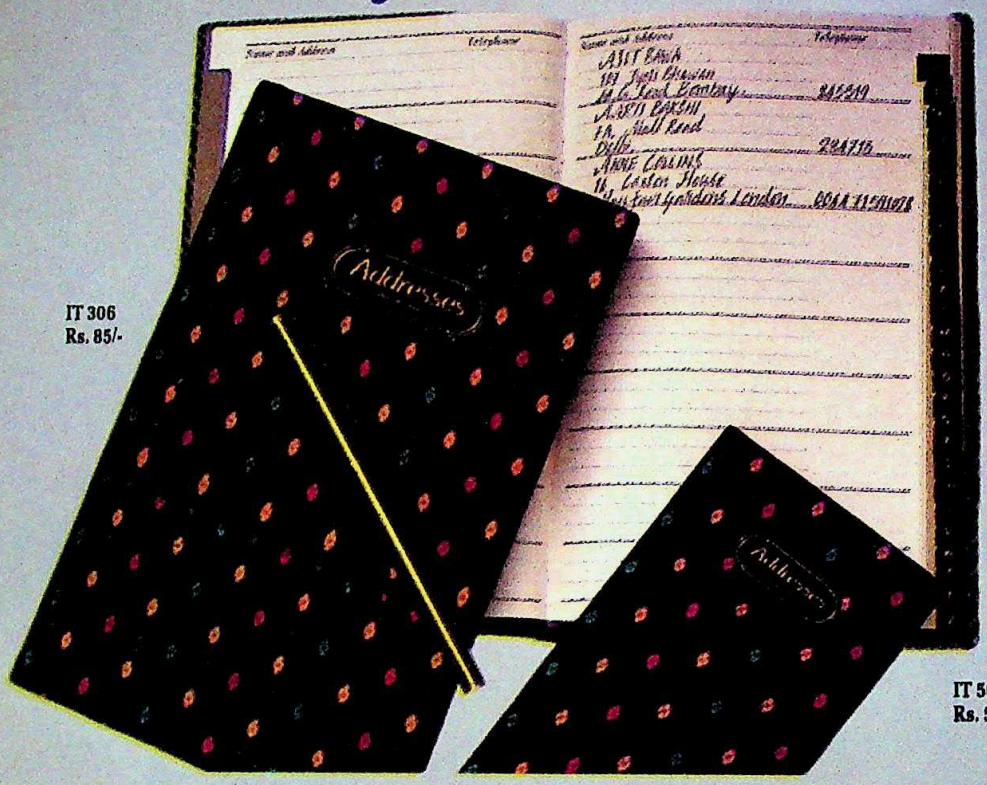

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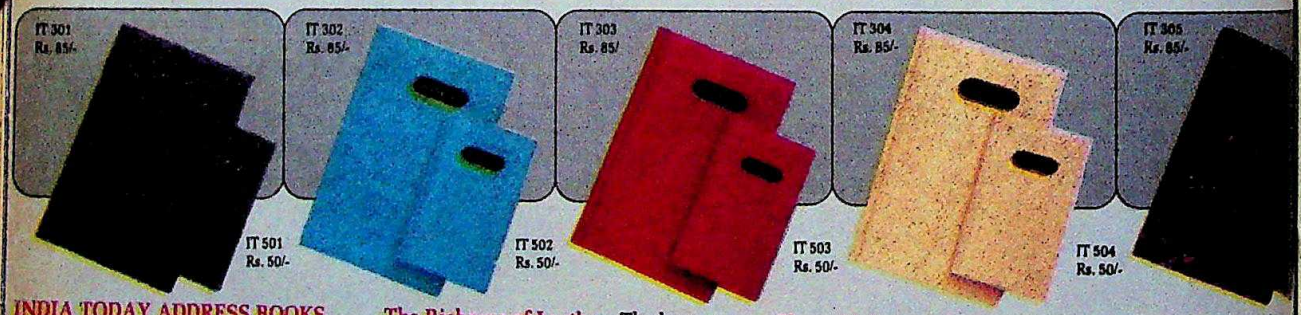

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PLAYING WITH LIVES

Saddam Hussein suffers from an incurable disease and knowing that he will die soon he wants to take his country along with him ("Ready for War", January 31). He is playing with the lives of his own people as he doesn't stand a chance against the US-led multinational forces. I feel sorry for the enthusiastic people of Iraq who have invested their faith in their 'dying king'.

Bangalore — K. CHIDANAND KUMAR

BIASED VIEWPOINT

It seems in the opinion of Inderjit Badhwar only Hindus are butchers, murderers and baby-killers ("Apocalypse Now", January 15). And they have no work but to kill Muslims and demolish mosques. One only wishes that he had read a little more of history. Even though temples are being destroyed in Kashmir and Hindus being turned into refugees in the supposedly secular India of today, convent-educated, westernised Indians like Badhwar have no interest in such events.

Rajkot — M. MISHRA

COMMUNAL CARNAGE

It is shocking to read about the killing of infants by frenzied mobs ("Anatomy of Carnage", January 15) in the communal riots. And all this done in the name of religion. Certainly no religion in the world could preach such brutality. Will these politically motivated people ever realise the damage they have done to the country?

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia — TARIQ TAMIMI

■ Mixing religion and politics must surely be the worst crime against God. In fact, the entire Ayodhya issue has been ignited purely for a selfish political advantage. I suggest that we allow the masjid to be where it is as destroying a place of worship would be an insult to God.

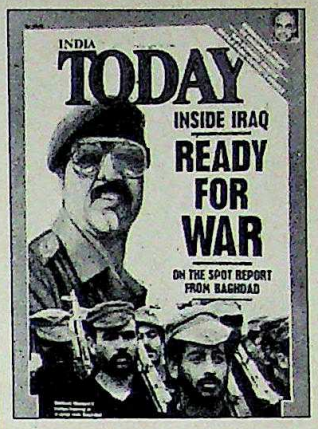
Bombay — KALI MODY

■ Your special report zeroed in on the reality of the communal riots brilliantly, though it failed to comment on the controversial role played by the BJP MLA Navman in Aligarh. He is allegedly responsible for planning attacks in various localities.

Aligarh — AMIR ALI KHAN

■ Your report on the communal violence was highly biased and anti-Hindu. Communal riots normally take place where Muslims constitute more than 15 per cent of the population. Ayodhya and rath yatras have little to do with it as the riots have been a recurring phenomenon since 1967.

Kolhapur — TATYA TENDULKAR



Your articles do not affect policy makers, they only heighten the students' frustration. And a thought arises—why not quit studies, become a street gangster and then a policy maker.

Dhanbad — NALIN GOEL

In this age of "you can buy anything", even *bhakti* is up for grabs, with a "costlier-than-your-temple" attitude.

Bangalore — KAMAL KHANDELWAL

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■ The political parties are not interested in finding a solution but merely regard the Ayodhya problem as an opportunity to increase their vote-bank. The ultimate sufferer is the common man. It is clear that for our politicians, the loss of life and property is a small price to pay in the pursuit of power. It is high time they change their thinking.

Bombay — NARENDRA B. DAVE

■ Ayodhya, now a place of shame, can become an international symbol of Indian tolerance and understanding if the Government invites Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Jews to build a centre where the religions of the world can meet.

The Netherlands — ERIK TESPSDZA

ALL-TIME LOW

The most important problem we face is not Mandal or even the mandir-masjid issue but the sorry state of our economy ("Hitting Rock Bottom", January 15). It is clear our economy is in a mess and merely blaming the previous governments won't be of much help. Attention has to be paid to curbing expenditure and imports and increasing exports. Resource mobilisation must be stepped up and popularist measures reduced.

Bangalore — D.B.N. MURTHY

UNRELIABLE POLICE

You are correct in your observation ("A Kidnapper's Bazaar", January 15) that the unreliability of the police has helped in making kidnapping a profession. The masses know that police interference only makes the situation more difficult. What is required is for the police to inspire confidence in the public.

New Delhi — S.R. SINHA

HEAPING ACCOLADES

Sunderlal Patwa deserves all the accolades possible for his action on Bharat Bhavan ("Culture Convulsions", January 15) and for making the institution accountable to the people through the legislature. The opposition to the amendment to the Bharat Bhavan Act is totally uncalled for.

Bombay — T. PITCHUMANI

POPULARIST PROPAGANDA

V.P. Singh's haves-and-have-nots campaign has an appealing tone ("Gearing Up", January 15) but it is totally misleading. Our down-trodden, poverty-stricken society is desperate for basic needs like food, water and education. And not job quotas and reservations which, in fact, are the root

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cause of all the unrest in our caste-ridden society. India needs constructive programmes and projects to create employment which will in turn rebuild our economy and improve the standard of living of the people.

Japan — VISHU TANTRY

SHORT-TERM SOLUTION

Although the army's intervention was necessary in Assam ("State of Strife", December 31, 1990), the Centre must make sure its presence is only temporary. If President's Rule carries on too long, people will get frustrated and then the whole mission will backfire.

Noida — ROHIT RAJ

■ The photograph of the mass grave in Assam only proves the Hitlerist ways of the United Liberation Front of Assam and shatters their Robin Hood image.

Imphal — IMROZ

POOR PERFORMANCE

Rajiv Gandhi's performance in Parliament has belied people's expectations ("Skirting the Issue", December 31, '90). In fact, even on major issues like Mandal and Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid, he hasn't taken a stand but remained a mere spectator. It is imperative for him to pull up his socks since any expectations that people have of the Congress(I) today are only because of him.

Madras — SASHI NAIR

JUSTIFIED DEMAND

The NRI-haters must understand that patriotism does not play a major role when Indians residing abroad invest their hard-earned money in India ("Asking for More", December 31, '90). A majority of NRIs work under rather punishing conditions and not the kind of comfort that people imagine.

London — Dr S. BHADURI

KANWAR SANDHU

Politicians are still following the policy of 'Divide and Rule'. It seems they follow the principle: if you can't solve a problem, create a new one.

Chandigarh — DHIRAJ CHIBBAR

Innocent people are dying in Punjab due to the indulgent hand of the Government. If the prime minister is serious about solving the problem, he should hand over the state to the army.

Kanpur — RAAJ GOPAL MEHROTRA

SHOCKING STATEMENT

I was shocked to know that Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav was making statements like *"Dekhte kya ho, bomb phenko aur bhoon dalo saalon ko"* ("Language Lows", December 15, '90). If chief ministers make such statements, what kind of a future can India expect. Indian politics has sunk too deep and it is time that action is taken to save the system before it completely collapses.

Michigan, USA — TAPAN KUMAR

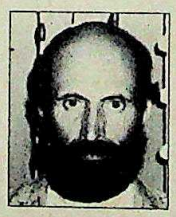
TRANSFER TROUBLE

Your coverage of the transfer of the IPS officer Mohan Joshi ("Dubious Move", November 30, '90) was very good. It is a shame that our 'great' leaders, instead of recognising the deeds of such a courageous police officer have succumbed to pressures—political and otherwise.

Secunderabad — S.S. REDDY

CLARIFICATION

The photograph published alongside is of Mohammad Javid Najeeb who has been mistaken for an official of the National Security Guards in the photograph carried on page 72 of our April 30, 1990 cover story ("Kashmir: Perilous Turn").



—Editor

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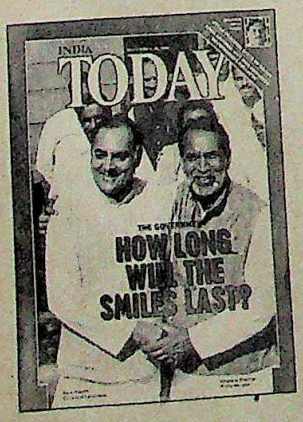

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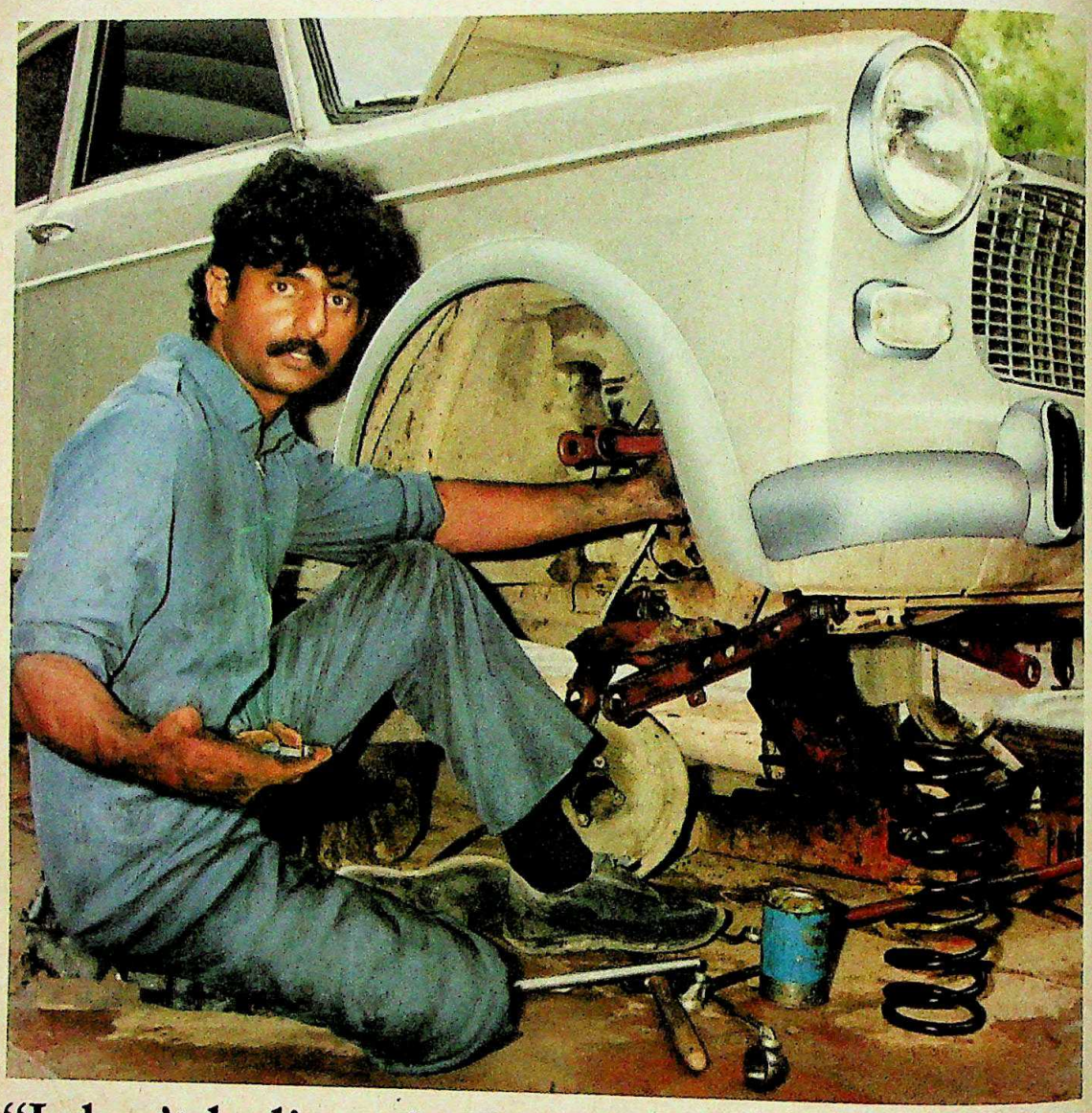

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Warring with Reason

As death and devastation stalk the Gulf region with the war entering its second week of horrendous destruction, the rest of the world waits and watches with a mixture of expectation and trepidation.

For the foreseeable future the economy and politics of that region—because there's no viable alternative,so far, capable of replacing oil as the life-blood of the world's trade, industry and commerce—are inextricably interwoven with the economic and commercial welfare of the global community. The vital interests that are involved here are not just those of Saddam Hussain or George Bush or King Fahd but, indeed of everybody on this planet.

India's interests in the Gulf that have grown exponentially over the years as her economy has expanded hardly need any elaboration: about 60 per cent of its oil, hundreds of thousands of jobs, the export of medium-range technology, precious foreign exchange through remittances from expatriates, efficient shipping lanes. And throughout her post-Independence era, India, which has historically had strong ties with many of the Middle East countries, has variously—and assiduously—wooed different nations in that region in the pursuit of these interests. And they are best safeguarded by the maintenance of peace and stability.

But the pursuit of self-interest in the sharing of global resources must never be allowed to become an argument for the right of a powerful nation to assert its might against a weaker one with the aim of securing economic advantage or forcefully maintaining its share of the resource pie. By any other name, that is simply piracy. Even the mighty Uncle Sam—for several practical geo-political reasons—did not resort to threat and muscle power during the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 that sent the economies of the western nations into recessionary spirals. If anything, those developments in the Middle East brought home to the United States clearly what John F. Kennedy had once described as the limitations of superpower power.

And the implications started becoming even clearer. Negotiations, cooperation, and a mutual respect for national aspirations, amid healthy world competition, were the far saner paths to achieving self-interest rather than the armed transgression of international boundaries.

And this is the crux of what's now happening in the Gulf. Saddam Hussain overran and annexed a sovereign nation motivated partly by the need to salvage his country's battered economy and meet international debt burdens created by his eight-year war against Iran. Among his many political gambles was his hope that the conflict would be localised—that the world community would be hopelessly divided along parochial interests like pan-Islamism, anti-Zionism, anti-Americanism, anti-Israeli, anti-Islam, East-West rivalry, or whatever.

While these issues still simmer, the biggest surprise, in the post-Vietnam war era, was the way in which the US painstakingly managed to unite world governments behind an American-led anti-Saddam alliance.

This was achieved by a remarkable America's change in international posture, wholly unlike the unilateralism and jingoism it had displayed in Grenada, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama. Washington, uncharacteristically, enunciated its concerns, not only in terms of its own self-interest but also in terms of the damage Saddam's aggression was causing to Third World interests.

America's mobilisation of the world community was not cosmetic: 12 UN Security Council resolutions; the support of Arab League; hectic last-minute negotiations with Saddam to urge him to withdraw, and finally, the enforcement of the UN's November 29 resolution sanctioning the use of force to evict Iraq from Kuwait.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN

When Saddam virtually snubbed the last-ditch attempt of U.N. Secretary General Perez de Cuellar to negotiate a peaceful settlement he invited war on himself. It is tragic, that in the bargain, innocent Iraqis are having to face the relentless hellfire of the allied war machine. We can only hope that once the UN objective of the war is met—liberation of Kuwait—the Americans will desist from destroying Iraq.

But doubts about America still gnaw. In most Third World nations, the image of the Ugly American, bullying his way around the world with sophisticated weaponry; engineering arms races in order to support its own inflated standard of consumption, still persists. The arms-peddling in Afghanistan. Creation of the arms race between India and Pakistan. Destabilising governments in Latin America. And who can forget America's initial support and arming, first of Iran and then of Saddam Hussain himself?

Many suspect that America's victory, no matter how desirable that outcome, may again render Uncle Sam doubly insufferable and bumptious. Part of this fear stems from the fact that the Soviet Union can no longer be expected to keep a balance of power with America. It is therefore important that whenever the war concludes America should remember that it is a member of the world community and not a cowboy nation.

America, in the aftermath of the war, will gain international plaudits if it eschews temptations to display military machismo and exhibits responsible behaviour emphasising cooperation, fairness and a genuine concern for the world community and the Third World that President Bush has repeatedly evoked as justification for world action against Saddam Hussain.

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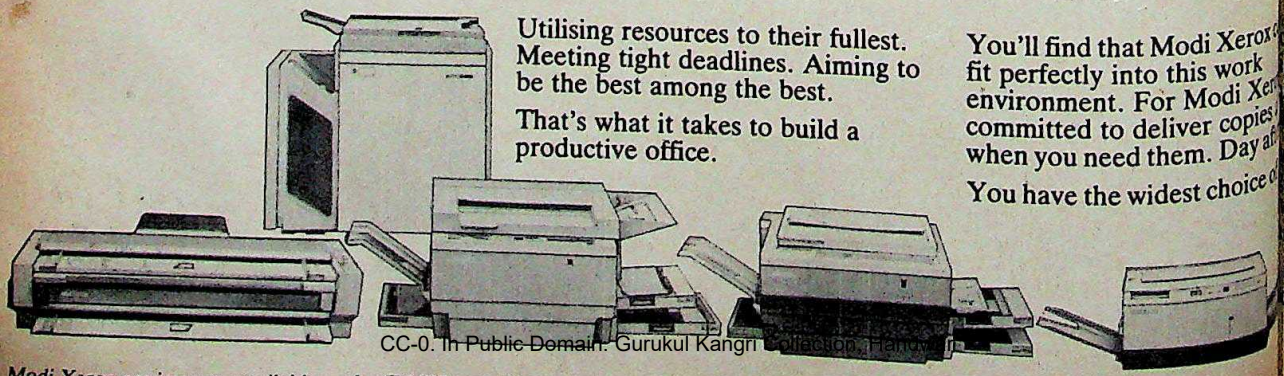

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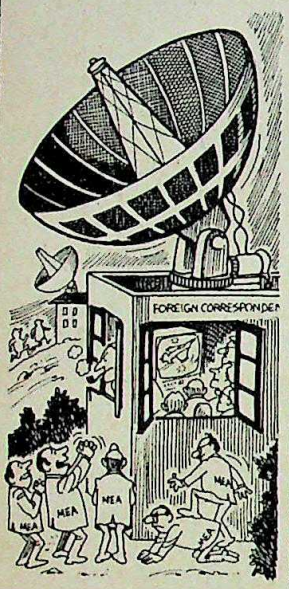
Blinkered Ways

● The External Affairs Ministry is forever being pasted for some gaffe or the other. But if the external affairs boys do blunder around, it is sometimes with



good reason: they often lack technology for even very basic inputs.

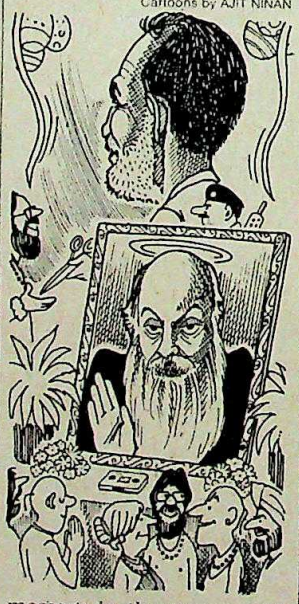
Last fortnight as all hell broke loose in the Gulf with waves upon waves of fighters and bombers of the US-led multinational force blitzing Iraq, people across the country glued themselves to transistors to catch BBC and VOA relays. But the superb reportage of the Beeb was only for the ordinary mortals; the more privileged hooked on to Cable News Network (CNN), to try and watch a piece of the actual action—both in Iraq and in other high-tension arenas where decisions were being taken. Hotels with dish antennas were swamped with visitors, checking in for the sole purpose of witnessing the progress of this most dramatic modern war, with its microchip technology and precision weapons.

But, alas, all this was not for our external affairs boys, who will have to rethink their entire middle-east perceptions before the month is out. They lacked this basic amenity, and had to petition the capital's foreign correspondents for the use of their CNN viewing facilities.

Strange Company

● If the prime minister's to be known by the company he keeps, he has the nation confused. He pops up every where. His most enigmatic appearance recently was at CBS's release of 20 audio tapes of Osho Rajneesh's discourses on Guru Nanak and Japuji Sahib. On the dais with him were Nanaji Deshmukh—quite natty in his new beard and ready to take the plunge back into politics after a period of self-exile in Gonda—and former President Giani Zail Singh. In fact, the two of them even walked up to the stage hand-in-hand. Hovering over the function was Osho Rajneesh's spirit who was being given a backdated official resurrection. Perhaps, his

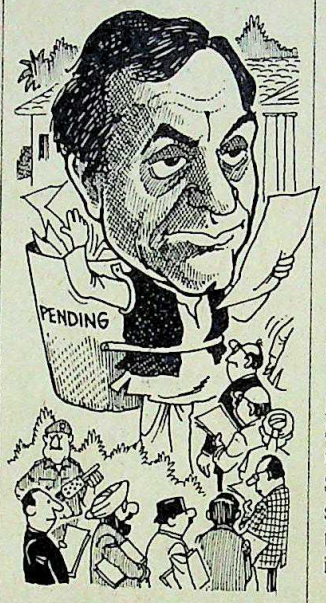
Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



message in the tapes could save Punjab, they all said.

Going to Waste

● The suave Kamal Morarka is the odd man in Chandra Shekhar's Government. The Campari-swilling industrialist, who also runs a successful multi-crore civil



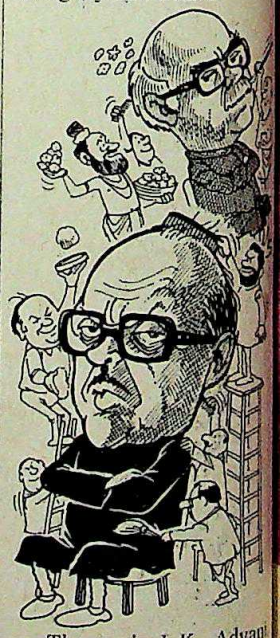
construction company, always seemed a little uncomfortable in the world of politics. But now, as the de facto chief of staff to the prime minister, Morarka finds himself neck deep in work-a-day politics and having to handle some of the less savoury sides of it. Since Chandra Shekhar has a distaste for being lobbied directly by favour seekers, the task is performed by Morarka at a daily open durbar to which flock hundreds of industrialists, bureaucrats and politicians.

And Morarka appears to be bearing up manfully. He not only makes it a point to listen to each one, but even asks them to put their requests down in writing. Of course, the consequences are tragic, with Morarka being the most swamped-with-paperwork minister.

The New Hard Sell

● Both V.P. Singh and L.K. Advani are putting the finishing touches to upmarket media campaigns to project them as serious leaders in the general elections that they hope will come sooner than later. Singh is gearing up to refurbish his battered image in the urban media which he had captivated during his days as Rajiv Gandhi's challenger but in which he was later pummeled because of his vote-bank politics and ineffectual governance.

An informal group led by Janata Dal General Secretary S. Jaipal Reddy and Singh's former press aide Prem Shankar Jha are devising strategies to re-sell Singh as the only politician with his integrity still intact.



The BJP's L.K. Advani through with rath yatra-ing is also being packaged as a best seller. His party has established a nine-member advisory group consisting of journalists as well as experts from advertisement agencies in Bombay and Madras to launch a Rs 2-crore public relations campaign for the saffron-hearted leader. Rediffusion, watch out.

TAIL PIECE

Bumper stickers in the capital are getting to be more innovative and topical. The latest one: "Don't have a shave, you may become the next prime minister." Seeing this a political wag suggested a little alteration: "Do have a quick shave, lest you be made the next prime minister."

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insights that are invaluable for Indian exports. And full-fledged trading services allow it to locate, procure and market merchandise in one integrated operation.

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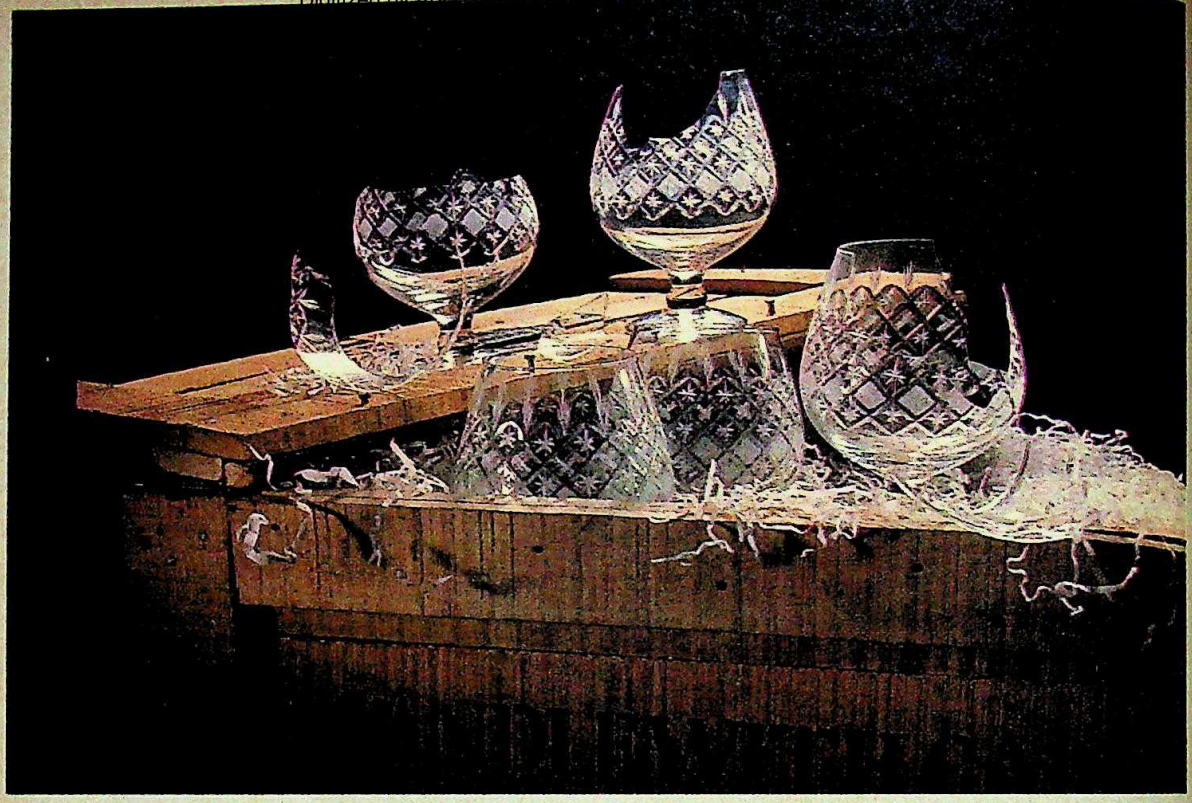

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The Times of India

• *We did not support V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar because we feel one is* nagnath *and the other is* sanpnath.

■ KANSHI RAM, Bahujan Samaj Party chief, in *Current*

• *Even if the militants get majority in the elected assembly and pass a resolution for Khalistan, that is not the end of the world.*

■ J.S. AURORA, MP, in *The Week*

• *West Bengal is perhaps the only place where Stalin is still being adored.*

■ L.K. ADVANI talking to newsmen

• *There is no parliamentary democracy in the country. Anything can happen and at any time.* ■ JYOTI BASU at a function in Calcutta

• *Let him consolidate his position as he has been changing his stand and making all kinds of statements.*

■ SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN on not holding further talks with Chandra Shekhar

• *I am the most condemned man. I am condemned to success.*

■ BABA AMTE in *The Telegraph*

• *There is no ban on my visit to anywhere, with a lady or anyone.*

■ SANJAY SINGH on his visit to Puri with Ameeta Modi

• *I have not taken an oath that I will not wear shoes....If I am wearing them now, it is because of the cold weather.*

■ M.F. HUSAIN, in the *Indian Express*

• *If I were to look at an unknown woman changing, I would be curious to see what she looks like without her clothes.*

■ KHUSHWANT SINGH in *Sunday Mail*

• *If you are not prepared to pay good money to watch me play Kasparov, what pleasure can you possibly derive in watching India play against PSV Eindhoven.*

■ M.A.K. PATAUDI in *Sportsworld*

• *Our politicians are acting all the time. Real life acting. I've never seen anything like this.*

■ VYJAYANTIMALA BALI in *The Telegraph*

• *The only Kapoors to have passed their exams were the girls.*

■ RITU NANDA, Raj Kapoor's daughter, in *Society*

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A 90001	_____	A 90009	_____
A 90002	_____	A 90010	_____
A 90003	_____	A 90011	_____
A 90004	_____	A 90012	_____

Afternoon Ragas Code	No. of Cassettes	Night Ragas Code	No. of Cassettes
A 90005	_____	A 90013	_____
A 90006	_____	A 90014	_____
A 90007	_____	A 90015	_____
A 90008	_____	A 90016	_____

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For further details, see the MUSIC TODAY advertisement in this issue. 01

MUSIC TODAY

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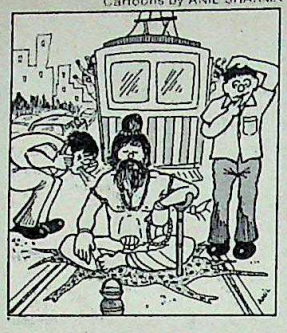
Cartoons by ANIL SHARMA

SLEEPING SADHU



■ Like the proverbial tortoise, slow and steady has for long been the war-cry of Calcutta's tram drivers. A tram driver on the Tollygunge-Rashbehari Avenue route recently stretched this motto a bit too far. He happily pulled his rickety vehicle to a stop on seeing a sadhu firmly ensconced on the track, lost in meditation. The driver got down to watch the holy man and waited for the prayer session to be over as disturbing a sadhu, he knew, is a sure way to invite the wrath of the gods.

The sadhu also must have been a tram driver in his earlier incarnation for his manifesto too seemed to be 'A steady nap after a slow puja'. He settled down on the track itself after what looked like a climactic and esoteric waltz, while trams queued up. Finally some helpful citizens who were reminded of Rip Van Winkle, seeing the sadhu snore on the tracks, woke him up and waved the trams on.

PROJECTILE PLOT

■ The capital's con-men are unstoppable. Their latest victim was an unsuspecting businessman from Alwar who had just withdrawn a large sum of money from his bank. As he was walking down the road with the briefcase full of greenbacks held tightly against his chest, he was suddenly hit by a glop of *paan* juice rudely spat at him by a passerby.

However, the streets were not without their share of good samaritans. Just as the businessman bent down to check out the extent of damage, a fellow pedestrian suddenly came up from behind and offered to help scrub away the offensive betel stains.

And for a brief second, the frazzled man put down his briefcase. Only to find himself in a bigger mess than he was in already. For, as he looked up the unsuspecting man discovered his briefcase had vanished—and needless to say, so had the bad samaritan.

TIPPLING THIEVES

■ It is a tired old cliche that crime pays. But no longer are burglars lured by the glitter of gold or the gleam of electronic gizmos. If a recent burglary in Bombay is a taste of things to come, thieves now go for more bacchanalian pleasures.

Last month three tough-looking men breezed into a Dadar wine shop and asked for a refill for their pockets. Given the manner in which they were brandishing their revolvers, the shopkeepers had no choice but to give in. Rather than risk their lives they quickly coughed up about Rs 20,000.

But that wasn't enough for them. Once their pockets were full, they also wanted a refill for their parched throats. But not for them the bottles of spirit which keep ordinary mortals happy. Instead they made off with a case of champagne. After all that bubbly, they are probably in high spirits. Till, of course, the police pop in on them. And then it will be a bad hangover.

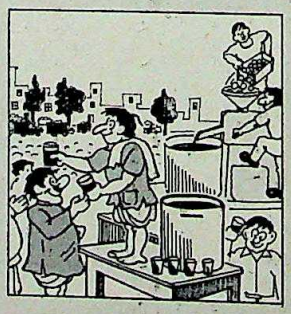
CITRIC CAUSE

■ Oranges and lemons, sold for a penny. Thus rang the air in the sleepy town of Nagpur early last fortnight.

The farmers of the orange country found themselves in quite a jam as a result of the fuel crisis. Since the farmers were unable to meet the high cost of transportation, oranges started piling up, littering the roadsides and languishing in many farms.

The losses were crippling and the state Government appeared to be dragging its feet as usual.

That was when the frustrated farmers decided to publicise their pathetic plight. They thrust free orange juice down the gullets of all and sundry.



So now, not only have the farmers helped spread some cheer in times of gloom but they have also managed to squeeze the best out of a seemingly impossible situation.

SCIENTIFIC RITES

■ Science no longer dispels myths; in fact, it advocates them. Particularly if you were to go by what happened at the Indian Petrochemicals Complex Limited plant at Maharashtra's Rasayani district.

After the recent explosion, the workers seem to have lost all faith in the plant's safety systems. Instead they are looking to the gods for help. And last fortnight, in an effort to prevent similar blasts in the future, they busied themselves with the performing of *yajnas*.

Unusually, it wasn't just the workers who were propitiating the gods. Even the management forsook modern science and chose to actively participate in the rites. A lot of money was literally poured into the fire—*desi ghee, laddus*, flowers—to pacify the fire spewing lord. Obviously science hasn't doused their fervour for superstition.

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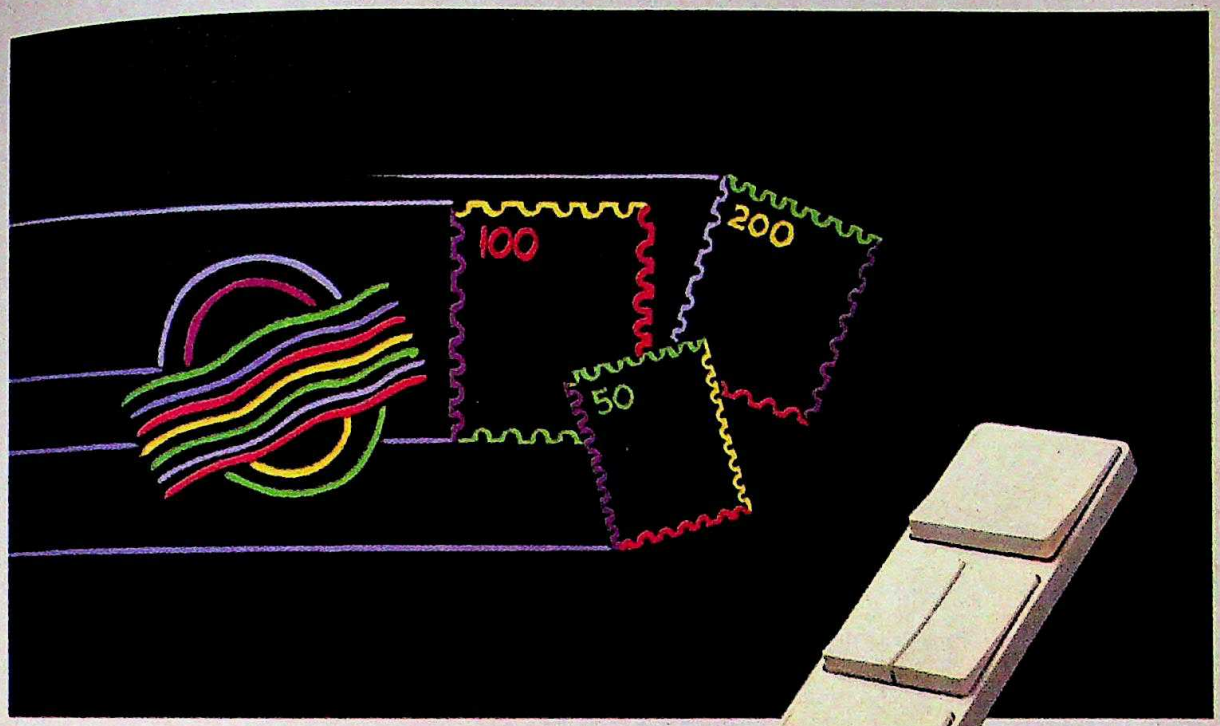

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CRITICAL P

By SHEKHAR GUPTA in the Middle East

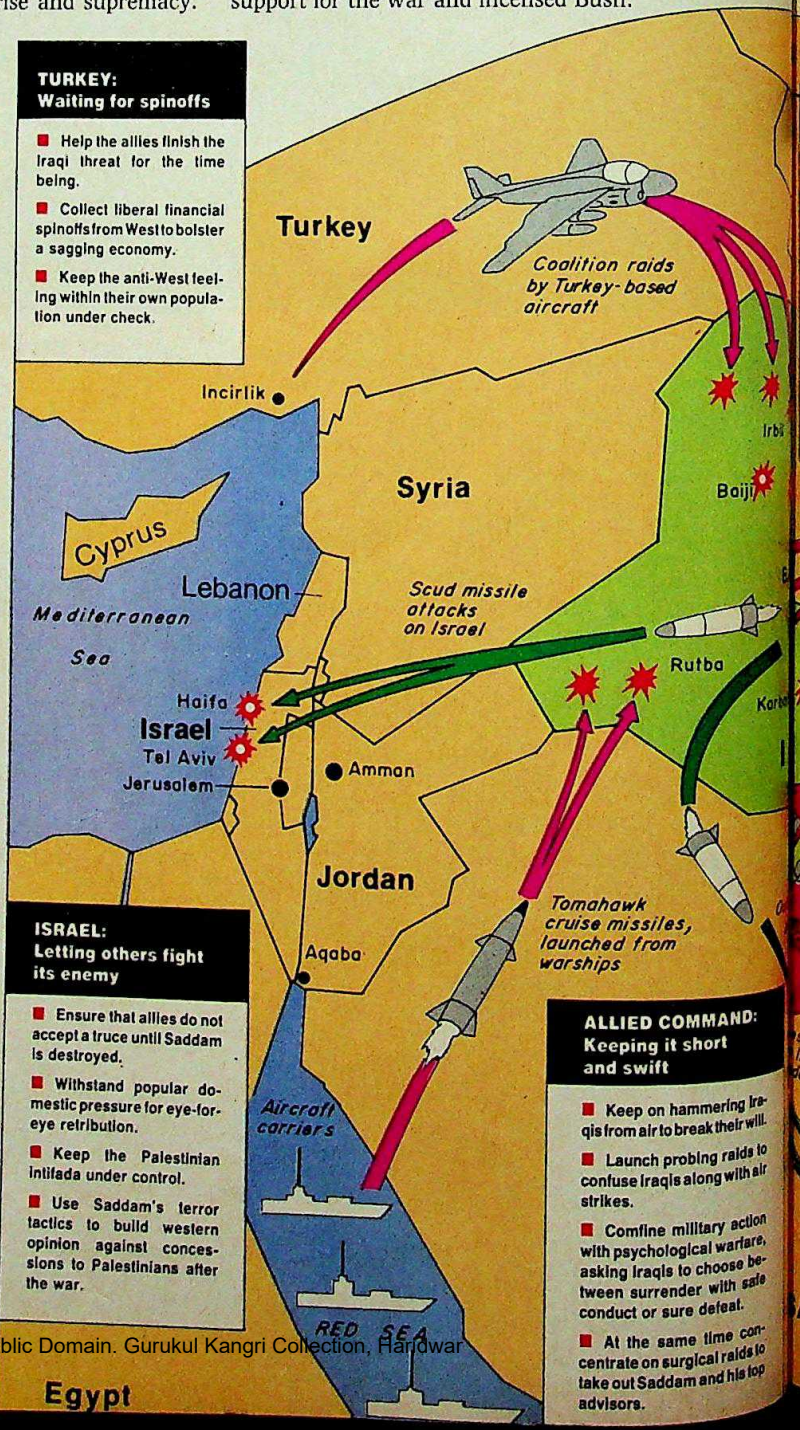
THE plot was familiar, the script stirring and the performances, honed by five months of rehearsal, slick. Yet last week as the blitzkrieg by the US-led coalition (somewhat presumptuously referred to as the allies) completed its first fortnight, the denouement still seemed far away and elusive.

Militarily, coalition forces were doing everything right: inflicting more casualties, controlling the skies, pinning down ground forces, achieving tactical surprise and supremacy. However, the question was, how to defeat an enemy that refuses to accept defeat, no matter what the score in terms of bodies on the ground or aircraft shot out of the skies? This, the underdog's obstinate refusal to concede defeat, is not a problem that generals are unfamiliar with. Chinese war philosopher Sun Tzu ruminated over it 2,400 years ago, when he wrote a treatise on how what mattered was breaking the will of the enemy and not decimating his armies physically to make him "concede defeat in the mind". Far from defeated, Iraqis were defiant as they pumped lakhs of barrels of crude into the Gulf, creating history's biggest oil slick that threatened the region's environment specifically the desalination plants supplying drinking water to Saudi Arabia.

Last week, after more than 12,000 combat sorties that dropped explosive tonnage equivalent of 15 Hiroshimas over Iraq—except that this time the tonnage came wrapped in the casings of smart, precision guided bombs and missiles—the US and coalition partners were wondering what to do next to break the will of a nation that was showing such resilience despite having been led by a despot and emaciated by five months of sanctions. One answer was a massive blitz of psywar (psychological warfare), once again rehearsed and planned for several months at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School in North Carolina. Loads of pamphlets, exhorting the Iraqi conscripts to surrender rather than face certain defeat and death, were rained over Saddam Hussain's concentrations.

There were reports, that were planted one day but dismissed the other, of large-scale defections, of execution of Iraqi generals and general discontent. Desperate to avoid a frontal assault and casualties, the allies were playing one last card to destroy the will of the "enemy" before the issue was settled tank to tank, bayon to bayonet. Not that the allies were worried about defe "There is absolutely no doubt that we are winning. We ju have to be patient," said Norman Schwarzkopf, the toug talking, acerbic and colourful US general commanding th coalition forces.

At the political level, however, patience seemed to b running out. The display of obviously battered allied POWs o Iraqi TV was a miscalculation that improved US popula support for the war and incensed Bush.



TURKEY: Waiting for spinoffs

- Help the allies finish the Iraqi threat for the time being.
- Collect liberal financial spinoffs from West to bolster a sagging economy.
- Keep the anti-West feeling within their own population under check.

ISRAEL: Letting others fight its enemy

- Ensure that allies do not accept a truce until Saddam is destroyed.
- Withstand popular domestic pressure for eye-for-eye retribution.
- Keep the Palestinian intifada under control.
- Use Saddam's terror tactics to build western opinion against concessions to Palestinians after the war.

ALLIED COMMAND: Keeping it short and swift

- Keep on hammering Iraqis from air to break their will.
- Launch probing raids to confuse Iraqis along with air strikes.
- Combine military action with psychological warfare, asking Iraqis to choose between surrender with safe conduct or sure defeat.
- At the same time concentrate on surgical raids to take out Saddam and his top advisors.

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L PHASE

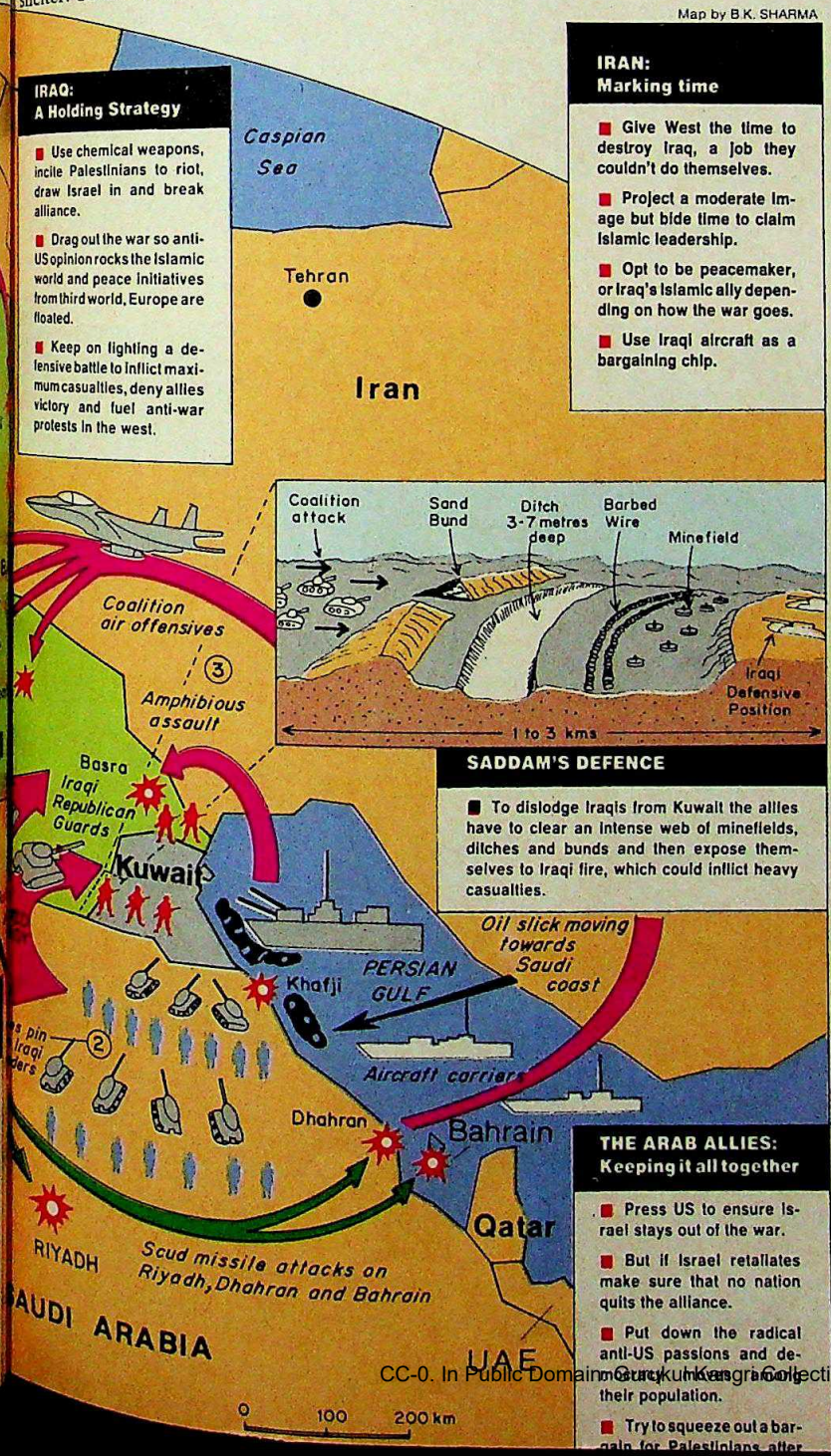
A walk down the fire exit of the Al Rashid hotel in Baghdad, once voted among the world's 20 best hotels and now famous as the haunt of newsmen reporting on the war, gives an indication of Saddam's staying power. It is, simply, that his entire capital and large parts of the other cities, are built for protracted war. The Al Rashid stairs lead several levels below ground into its hardened underbelly, a large basement which is not just bomb-proof, but even nuclear-proof. Every other hotel has a tell-tale sign on the staircase, pointing at the shelter. So do most office complexes, apartment buildings, shopping centres. The country has been built for war physically and mentally. The Iraqis had built bomb shelters with most of the new buildings. A look at Baghdad shows how much of it has been built in the past decade or so. Saddam thus is not the only Iraqi to enjoy the privilege of having the security of an underground bunker.

SECRET OF SADDAM'S STRATEGY

WILY POLITICS, DUG-IN ARMY

ALSO, while Saddam may be a dictator and a despot or even foolhardy, he is not stupid. He has perfected a strategy based on the West's weaknesses: over confidence and reluctance to accept casualties. When he prepared for war he knew exactly what the equation was. His advisors and lieutenants often sketched a war scenario strikingly similar to the ones painted by their western counterparts: several days of precise bombing by massed allied aircraft, an electronic blitz, flattening of key targets with long-range missiles and carpet bombing of troop concentrations. They admitted they had almost no capability to deny the coalition their airspace. They concentrated, instead, on denying them their prized targets. It was common knowledge in Baghdad that the Government had used the preparatory time to move vital equipment, command centres and the decision-making military bureaucracy to the safety of underground basements. When the bombers came they did not miss. From eyewitness accounts by the expatriates fleeing

Map by B.K. SHARMA



A COSTLY WAR

The per day cost in the first phase of the war has been calculated at Rs 3,700 crore. The official US estimate of a three-month war, taking replacement costs for equipment and presuming minimum casualties, is $89 billion or Rs 1,64,650 crore which is 40 per cent of India's annual income.

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Iraq it is evident that the bombing was precise and surgical, flattening exactly the buildings that were targeted. Whether what was left inside the buildings was of any consequence or not is another question. In fact, even on the eve of the war the joke among the western diplomatic corps in Baghdad was that Saddam had moved everything from his headquarters except the files on pay and pension of his troops as they wouldn't need them anyway after the war.

Indian generals who trained them in the past say the Iraqis may be unimaginative but are fast learners. Saddam too learnt a few lessons from Iran and one of these was that with resolve and tactics you could fight against an enemy controlling the skies. Those close to his inner circle in Baghdad say he studied the Iranian tactics closely, perfected some in his own defence of Basra and filled the gaps by going on an arms buying spree. He is believed to have spent nearly $250 billion or the bulk of his oil revenues over six years in rearming his forces. As he flourished the dollar the Western companies made a beeline for Baghdad. The French built his nuclear plants, Germans chemicals factories, Belgians constructed the bunkers. The Soviets, despite their political estrangement with Ba'athists provided latest MiG-29s and surface to air missiles against hard currency and when Iraqis were on the run around Basra the Americans gave them vital satellite information. Western companies also helped Saddam modify his Scuds. Chickens are now coming home to roost. The Iraqis also knew that a major coalition effort would go into suppressing the Scuds and thus took special care to save them. Western military sources now confirm that the Iraqis are working along an elaborate, well-rehearsed shoot-and-sc plan. Launchers are hidden under highway underpas grain silos and underground parking lots from where they pulled out for a short while, fired and then driven back in th safe harbours. Besides, the Iraqis have played a frustra game of cat and mouse with coalition air power and satelli by planting scores of decoy missile launchers.

ALL the Iraqis have to do is light a fire under a de launcher. In a cold environment in the night satellite's infra-red sensors are bound to pick it up as the data is tallied with the reconnaissance aircraft's findi a raid is launched to knock out the decoy. How many decoys included in the coalition's claims of destroyed Scud missiles question with a vital bearing on the future course of the wa For, as long as some Scud launchers are available, Saddam have the capability of unleashing chemical attacks on dist targets including Israel, keeping the allies on tenterhooks

Iraq's conservation of much of its air force, through combination of shrewd camouflage and dispersal, is another surprise for the allies but will be of lesser consequen as the war progresses. Once in the air the Iraqi aircraft sitting ducks for western aircraft fitted with BVR (beyond visu range) radar-missile combinations. As the dozen or so engagements have shown, the Iraqi aircraft have been sh down before they could even sight western intruders. An force is no good if permanently grounded and the Iraqi Force is as good as finished if it takes to wings.

Saddam would thus like to preserve his air force a

Columns of smoke cloud the Baghdad skyline as the first coalition bombers return

The coalition mounted an air assault unmatched in ferocity and accuracy in the history of modern warfare b failed to break either the will of Saddam Hussain or the backbone of his war-hardened command structu

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basically confront the coalition raids with passive, ground-based air defence built around a multitude of missiles and anti-aircraft artillery. Iraq has nearly 5,000 anti-aircraft guns and can saturate the skies with flak around sensitive targets. Ninety per cent of the allied aircraft lost so far have fallen to this primitive defence. Senior Indian Air Force (IAF) officers say that the essential components of passive air defence are runway repair ability and ability to fly from semi-prepared runways. Iraqis have over the years stocked quick-drying cements to repair runways. "Moreover, for passive air defence, a simple ultra high frequency (UHF) radio communication will suffice, particularly since there is only one army to coordinate," says a senior officer in Indian air defence artillery.

Saddam may later use some of his surviving aircraft in suicidal attacks, possibly over Israel. Military attaches in Baghdad and neighbouring capitals single out the obsolete Soviet-made Sukhoi-7 in this context. An aircraft that even IAF discarded nearly five years ago, the Su-7 carries a warload of 8,000 pounds over long distances. It is also equipped to fly from rough surfaces and can land on skids. At some stage the Iraqis could use suicidal waves of these aircraft in the hope that some will penetrate prized targets in Israel or Saudi Arabia. A senior Indian air commodore, who was a member of the IAF training missions in Iraq, told INDIA TODAY in Delhi that, additionally, the Iraqi MiG-29s have low-presssure tyres and could use rough strips or highways to operate even when the runways are all knocked out.

As part of his tactics to delay the coalition advance and to inflict the maximum causalties Saddam recently moved his Tactical Reserve (consisting of two divisions plus having T-55 tanks) from along the Wadi al Batin (a river bed) in the west to near Kuwait City. The idea was to give the force greater flexibility of deployment. The positioning of the Republican Guards as a strategic reserve (T-72 tanks) in the area north of Kuwait and south of Basra is aimed at preventing a blow in the rear through an airborne assault and to stall a roll-

FIVE O'CLOCK FOLLIES

The allied campaign has its share of exaggerated claims in the euphoria of war. Examples:

- **Destruction of Iraqi Air Force after the first air assault—now 70 per cent believed to be intact.**
- **Destruction of all the fixed Scud launchers, a claim belied by repeated Iraqi missile attacks.**
- **Paralysing of Iraqi command, control and communication systems—but Saddam still seemed very much in control of his forces.**
- **Decimation of the Republican Guard.**

AFP

Troops from US airborne divisions practise helicopter assaults in the desert

Now the allies face the devil's alternative of going into land assaults against fortified Iraqi positions entailing heavy casualties despite their mobility and technological edge. The Iraqis hope the desert will consume them.

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ISRAEL

Straining on a Leash

HERE was a country that fought, and won, a war against the heaviest odds even before it came into being. Here was a country which made aggression the bedrock of its strategic planning. Here was a nation whose hallmark was retribution, three eyes for one. Here is the country now, cowering in fear, its 3.5 million citizens clutching their gas masks waiting for the next siren and Scuds to run to their gas shelters.

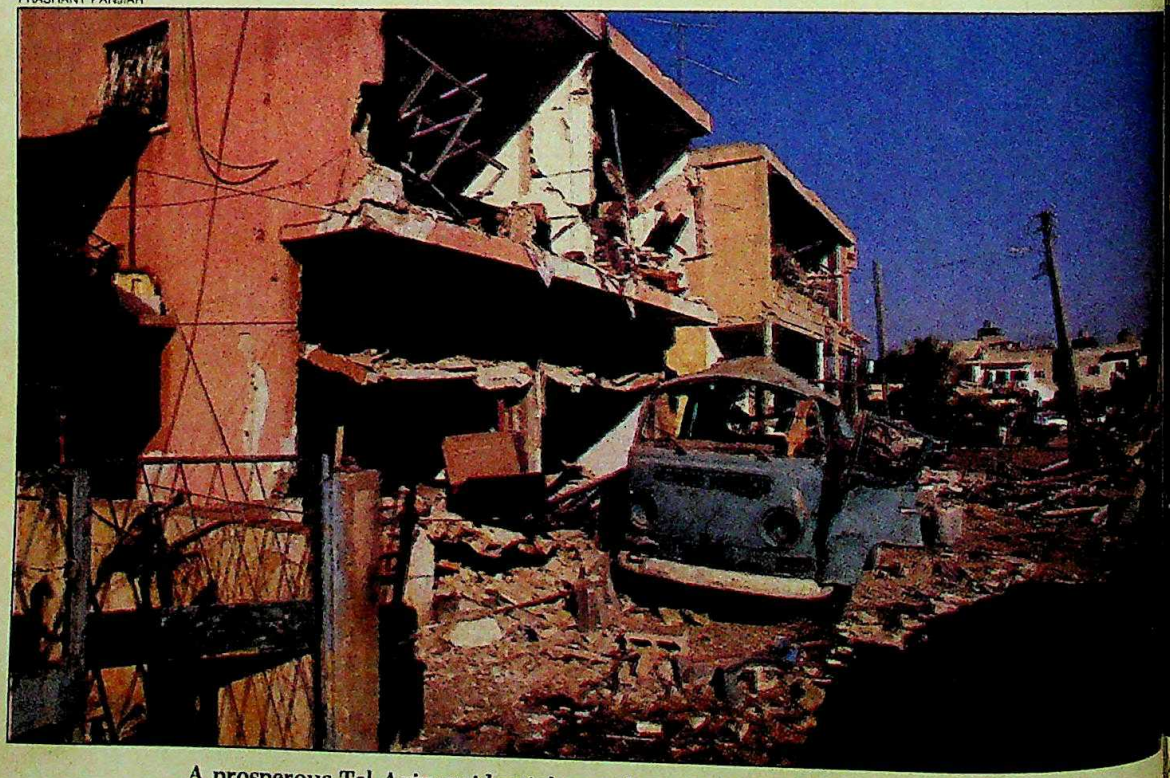
"Something very unusual is happening to us Israelis," admits Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. For once, Israelis have convinced themselves that the best form of defence is to let the others carry out the offensive on their behalf. But that can be traumatic. Last fortnight as the first missiles fell over a residential area of Tel Aviv (strict censorship guidelines prohibit even a hint of the location) the trauma was palpable. Shemtor Davidy, 21, an Israeli army soldier clutches his M-16 rifle and stares at the ruins of his house. His four siblings are in hospital, his parents in a state of shock. Shemtor seethes with anger. "Why are we doing it to ourselves? Why don't we hit back?" Next door, Sara Shour, 23, a salesgirl, looks at the wreckage of what was once her house. "I want Israel to give them hell." There is also a feeling of pride: "Shouldn't the world be grateful to Israel for knocking out Saddam's reactors in 1981?"

Saddam kept his promise of hitting back at Israel the moment the first shot was fired, leaving the people of Israel in the kind of confusion they'd never faced in their 45-year history. For the first time, they were caught in a war they had very little to do with. For the first time they faced a weapon they could not defend themselves against. For the first time they had to invite foreign troops on their soil to defend them as the US Patriot missile batteries arrived.

Yet the mood was not downbeat as the country, known to be one of the most efficiently regimented—all voluntary—in the world, showed its real mettle. Every citizen and foreign visitor was given a gas mask and taught how to use it. Varsno Abram, a Haipha carpenter, summed up the mood: "We Jews are familiar with gas. We survived it then, we will survive it now."

For mere survival, no state could have done more for its citizens. Through 24 hours every day special vehicles equipped with instruments to detect the slightest traces of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons materials drive around the cities. The hospitals have rows of stretchers waiting for a calamity. Gas masks have been designed and procured even for pet dogs. Owners have learnt to keep

PRASHANT PANJIAR



A prosperous Tel Aviv residential area devastated by an Iraqi Scud missile

Political compulsions have forced the Israelis to turn the other cheek in the hope that the Americans will do their job for them, but they assert they will get even soon enough. The restraint is temporary and tactical

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arakeets and love-birds in protected cages like the abies' incubators. But if a chemical attack comes they re determined not to concede more than 300 casualties. It is because of our precautionary buildup that Saddam s not using chemicals yet," says an official. Israelis uspect gases will be rained on them the moment they lacken their vigil.

There is no slackening of the vigil in the skies as well. Israeli fighters circle overhead all day and night paying pecial attention to the 60-km strip of the valued heartland etween Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Radio Baghdad's city of depravity and immorality". But the Israelis will be re-warded for their restraint. Billions of dollars in aid and he latest armaments will come from a grateful West and in he long term Jerusalem will use the PLO's Saddam connec-ions to deny concessions to the Palestinians.

There is a cruel irony in threatening the Jewish tate with killer gases made with German assistance and o Israeli fails to note that. "I tell the Germans you we a very great moral debt to the Jewish people. After ne third of our people were asphyxiated no one would have magined this will happen to us again," says Foreign linister David Levy.

The fear of gas is only exacerbated by the uneasy peace in he occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli worst-case cenario is made up of the twin fears of massive gas attacks nd a violent uprising in the territories. So far, the Palestin-ans have been quiet. That can change any moment.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Tel Aviv

RASHANT PANJIAR

A child in a gas mask during a missile raid alert

he crisis has brought out the best in the Israelis, elr organisation, national spirit and defiance.

over into Iraq, if Kuwait falls. The Republican Guard is Saddam's final card. In fact its former commander, Gen. Hussain Rashid, has been elevated as the chief of army staff.

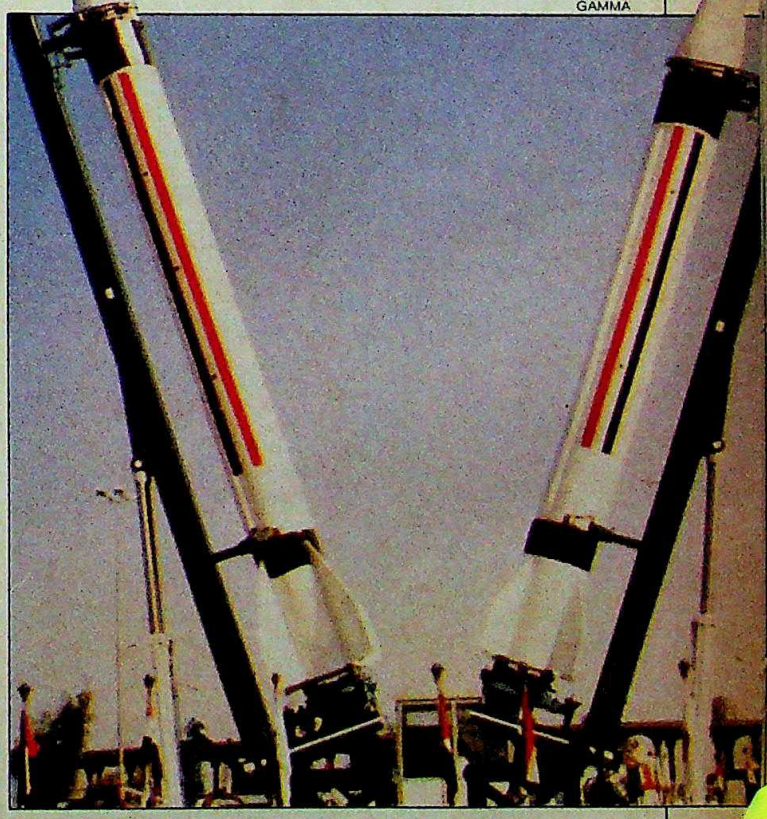
Saddam's military preparation is complimented by a remarkable emotional buildup. Many in the West wonder why Iraqis would fight a self-destructive war for a dictator. But that is because the western analysts look at an Arab nation with culturally blinkered eyes. To a people so utterly unfamiliar with democracy of any sort Saddam is merely a leader who made them discover a national identity. As Mohammed Saeed Al Sahhaf, Iraqi minister of state for foreign affairs, says, "Saddam has reminded his people and the world that we are not a banana republic. We are Mesopotamia, cradle of the Arab civilisation. It is worth dying for." The allied strategists failed to take this factor into account.

THE COALITION'S DILEMMA

HOW TO WIN QUICKLY BUT WITH MINIMUM CASUALTIES

ONE of the most persistent images of the war will be an American pilot interviewed on his return from a strike mission. "It was a good mission, just as in training," he said. "We came to give Saddam a kick in the butt, we did it." The problem facing the American strategist now is, what happens when the "enemy" is undaunted by a mere "kick in the butt". "Let Saddam boast. The moment he sees one B-52 bomber overhead, he will rush with a white flag," a western diplomat had told INDIA TODAY in

GAMMA



Al Hussain missiles: The improved Iraqi version of the Soviet Scud-B has been reaching Tel Aviv and Riyadh with frightening accuracy. And so well has Saddam played the game of shoot-and-scoot with his mobile launchers that the allied planes and satellites have still not spotted out a large number of them.

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"It will be a long war"

Naji Al Hadithi, chief of information, editor of the Baghdad Observer *and Iraq's most prominent spokesman.*

On fighting a superpower: Here is an arrogant President of a country that thinks it is the only superpower and should teach the others a lesson.

On Iraq's strategy: We will make it a long war and will deny the enemy the advantage of speed.

On Kuwait: Who will fight for the Kuwaitis? The sheikh who took a wife every Thursday? Or their young men who are all vacationing in Europe? Or the poor, exploited Palestinians? Kuwait is a bogey used by the US to come and fight for Israel.

Baghdad. Now, calculations had changed. The Americans now have to make that one extremely crucial decision which they had worked so hard to avoid for so many months: when, where, and how to launch the land attack.

JUST as he was prepared for the air assault, Saddam is dug in more than adequately for defence on the ground. His army defends Kuwait on more or less Soviet lines—the ditch-cum-bund or DCB doctrine not unfamiliar in the subcontinent. The defensive formations are arrayed along four layers of anti-tank ditches and bunds. If the Americans are able to cross one ditch and bund they will have to traverse open space till they reach the second ditch. It is in this open space that the attention of the sizeable, massed Iraqi artillery will be focused turning it into a veritable killing ground for the allied forces.

The coalition, consequently, is shy of making a frontal assault and seems to prefer the option of a northwards thrust through Iraqi territory to outflank the Kuwaiti defences and split the Iraqi Army and the elite Republican Guard that brings up the rear. At the same time Marines and other special forces could launch a joint amphibious and heliborne assault from the Gulf to take Kuwait City and vital installations. The plan would be to trap a largely conscripted, under-paid and poorly-led Iraqi Army in a double-pincer with no place to run.

But if the Iraqis fight on, drag the battle into the built-up areas of Kuwait and perhaps Al Faw, the city on the edge of southern Iraq only recently rebuilt after total destruction in the eight-year-war, they could extract a price the allies cannot afford. In open desert and builtup urban areas the casualty rate could be 50 times higher than that in Vietnam. Even the games simulated at the US Army Desert Warfare Centre at Fort Irwin have indicated high casualties in ideal textbook conditions if the Iraqis decide to fight. In Vietnam 52,000 Americans had died in low-intensity conflict over 12 years. In open desert that provides no cover and against murderous firepower of an entrenched enemy the casualties could reach the 10,000-mark within a week of fighting. Among the coalition commanders there are already apprehensions that the Iraqis will fight, at least for a few days. Against Iran, the Iraqi Army's performance was dismal. But today the mood is different. Queried on his army's poor record against Iran an Iraqi brigadier told INDIA TODAY in Baghdad: "We are not stupid. We have gone over that question very, very carefully. The problem was that we did not hate the Iranians enough. Americans are a different matter altogether."

The motivating force of anti-Americanism is something the Americans themselves understand so well now. That is

"A new kind of security"

JORDAN's Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal has been strongly pleading for a peaceful settlement.

On the failure of peace efforts: We did not address the diplomatic solution. In the talks with Baker, Tariq Aziz said Iraq would accept the principle of withdrawal if it is also applied elsewhere. I saw no attempt to pick that chestnut out of the fire.

On the future of the Middle East: Saudi Arabia has bought arms worth $250 billion in the past few years. Iraq has spent just as much. Kuwait bought arms worth $50 billion. How much security did it bring? We have to think.

"Iraq will be punished"

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's deputy foreign minister, is the most articulate champion of his country's cause.

On the missile scare: The Israeli Government and Army will not tolerate a daily lottery in which the people go into a sealed room and wait for a bomb.

On retaliation: Something un-Israeli is happening. Today retaliation isn't our principle concern. We've taken note of what Saddam's done. When we want to punish there's plenty we can do.

On the future: I don't know what Saddam is going to do. We are not sitting in Saddam Hussain's bunker. But we can't just sit and wait for ever.

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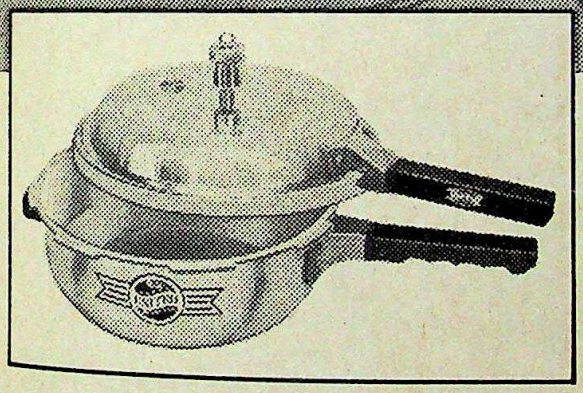

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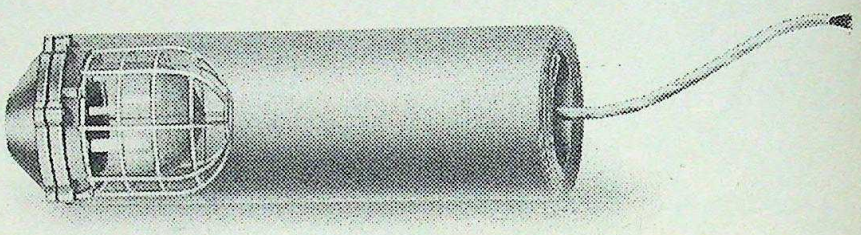

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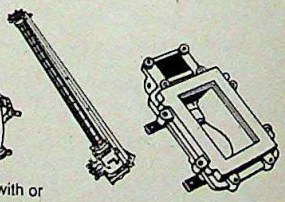

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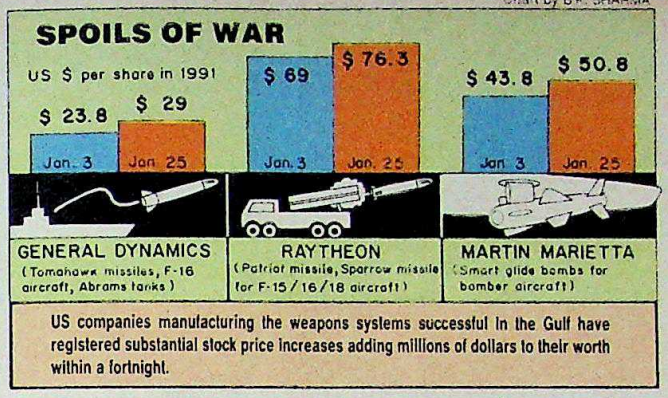
what limits their options even more severely. If they go into land battle quickly, they may suffer heavy casualties. If they delay the inevitable for too long, the growing surge of anti-Americanism among their own allied Muslim states may break the coalition. Soon enough, they will have to choose the devil's alternative. They have to lock horns with a dug-in army and risk casualties to break the stalemate for, as the infantrymen always so cynically say, in war victory is still measured by the foot. As time passes, opposition will also grow to attacks on Iraq's infrastructure. The UN resolution authorised the allies to free Kuwait and not to destroy Iraq as an economic and military power.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



US companies manufacturing the weapons systems successful in the Gulf have registered substantial stock price increases adding millions of dollars to their worth within a fortnight.

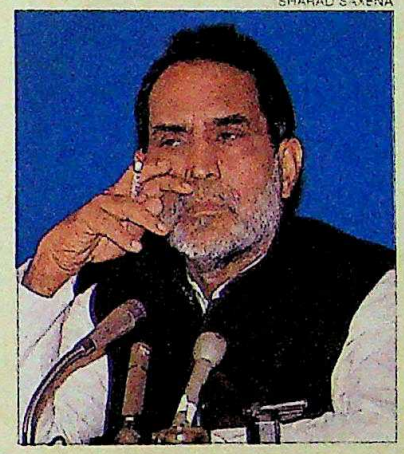
The next question will be the financial cost of a long war. The Airland battle 2000 doctrine, involving the tandem movement of air and ground assaults is a concept written and rehearsed for Central Europe where, against an invading Eastern Bloc army, any cost would have been justified. To employ it against a ragtag Third World army now will hardly be a cost-effective exercise.

Sure enough, there will be long-term spin-offs in terms of increasing foreign demand for battle-proven systems. But the immediate effect will strain an already stretched US economy to limits.

INDIA'S GULF POLICY

Walking a Tightrope

SHARAD SAXENA



Chandra Shekhar

By not taking sides India has escaped economic reprisals.

ON the face of it, it would appear that India's condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has forced a change in its foreign policy in the Gulf.

Despite its oft-expressed dislike of superpower interference in the region, India has supported US action against Iraq. In rejecting the Iraqi demand for linking the Palestinian issue with the current crisis, India risked hurting a cause it has promoted in every international forum. India is also seen as supporting Saudi Arabia, a long time Pakistan ally against Iraq.

But by retaining the core of its Gulf policy which is one of avoiding taking sides in the region India has escaped penalties and reprisals in the form of reduction of oil supplies, trade, aid, labour force contracts and the risk of sharper tilts towards Pakistan. Says Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey: "India would like to maintain its bilateral relations with every country in the region."

For reasons political and economic, Indo-Iraqi relations have always been particularly cosy. Iraq is in arrears on payment of contracts of some Rs 900 crore yet the Ba'athist regime in Iraq is seen as the only pro-Indian, secular force in an Islamic world which has consistently supported India.

Iraq has earned the ire of the Pakistani Government for being the only Muslim country to support India's stand on Kashmir at the Organisation of Islamic Conference. As former Indian foreign minister I.K. Gujral says: "If Iraq ceases to matter in the region we will be left with fundamentalist regimes like Iran and Israel with the US tilting towards Israel."

Commercially, Iraq sells India two-thirds of its oil requirements, occasionally on concessional terms. Indian exports total some Rs 150 crore and remittances from over 20,000 Indians boost foreign exchange reserves.

By initially refusing to use harsh language in condemning the Kuwaiti aggression and by appearing to acquiesce to the United Nations rather than to the US demand for a withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, India has retained its links with Iraq. The Iraqi Ambassador in India, Dr Abdul Wadood el Shekhly, describes it glowingly as one of "deep love and friendship" reflected in the "overwhelming response" of the "Hindus and Muslims of India".

Similarly, although Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar caused a flutter in the Palestinian camp by his sharp refusal to support any linkage between the Palestinian cause and the Kuwaiti one, the Palestinian Ambassador, Dr Khaled-el-Sheikh, believes that "India's stand on the matter is fair and constant". He was sufficiently alarmed to rush to Foreign Minister V.C. Shukla, who told him of India's commitment "to the liberation of Palestine today rather than tomorrow". Even Saudi Arabia speaks approvingly of India's "comprehensive and understanding" response.

What is quietly evolving is India's relationship with the US. According to Dubey, the end of the Cold War means that India "is having to review and bring significant shifts in its policy to cope with these post-Cold War changes." Gujral believes this re-think has been going on for the last two years. As a result, he maintains "the US no longer looks at India through the prism of the Soviet Union."

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

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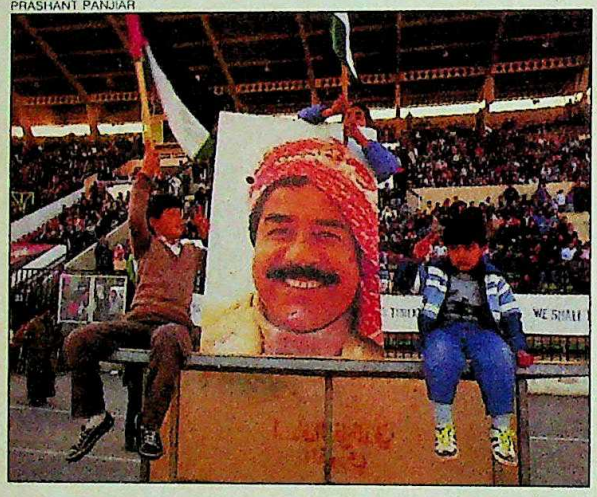
THE UNEASY ALLIANCE

CAN IT SURVIVE THE ONSLAUGHT OF SADDAMISM?

A swathe of vicious anti-Americanism cuts across the entire Islamic world, from North Africa to Pakistan and then onwards in the east up to Malaysia. Last week demonstrations turned violent in several parts of Pakistan, from Karachi to the Frontier. In Syria and Egypt, the two crucial Arab members of the coalition, the militant right-wing Muslim brotherhood was exploiting the situation. In the course of time it was inevitable that similar feelings of Islamic kinship will come to the fore in the sheikhdoms as well. The American embassies in most capitals of the Islamic countries

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Pro-Saddam Palestinian rally in Amman

By reopening Arab wounds, Saddam has become the Middle East's first truly cult pan-Arabic figure.

aligned with them have been surrounded by double barricades and citizens given orders to move out. The longer the war continues, the longer the denouement is delayed, the stronger the protests will get.

Pakistan is a striking example. The country has a detachment of 10,000 troops, including an armoured brigade in the front echelons in Saudi Arabia. Yet the support for Saddam is visible on every street-corner in colourful posters depicting a uniformed, benign Saddam bent in prayer before the holy Al Aqsa mosque or the Bait-ul-Muqaddas in Jerusalem, Islam's third holiest shrine. Fighters fly overhead and soldiers march while the inscription reads: "Ya Allah, give us too Saddam's zeal to liberate our holy places." In a series of meetings over the past fortnight, the support for Saddam and opposition to the US has cut across party lines even bringing out several leaders of the ruling IJI coalition openly against the involvement of Pakistani troops. The Jamaat-e-Islami, an IJI constituent, is itself in the forefront of the anti-US drive. "This is a war between the Ummah (the Islamic world) and America. The Muslims should try Bush at every street corner for foisting war on them and give him exemplary punishment," Syed Munawar Hassan, emir of the Karachi unit of the Jamaat, told a large gathering last fortnight. The Pakistan Government has clamped down, banning the sale of Saddam posters and bumper stickers. But there is no stopping the wave.

Even in Egypt, far away on the western edge of Asia and known for a relatively secular system, the sympathy for a

THE UNITED STATES

Battle on the Bo

FOR much of America the Gulf war continues to b mesmerising television experience.

Though labelled an attack by "allies", the cris the Gulf is largely an American war. And TV companies their viewers, "catching" instant coverage of a Gulf flare has willy-nilly become part of the entertainment—as if war is some sort of unprogrammed thriller series. In sponsors of the TV coverage of the Super Bowl desperately keeping their fingers crossed that Sad would keep his Scud launchers cold during the three-h game on January 27. (Super Bowl is the American foot "final" and traditionally the most watched TV event. programme, which generally enjoys top of the popul charts ratings, commands a whopping Rs 15.2 crore for minute of advertising time.)

On the political side of the game, some experts are intrigued as to why Saddam allowed live coverage fr Baghdad initially. If he was aiming at world sympathy the allied carnage, why did he forbid depiction of damage, particularly in human lives? Some say he did want to demoralise his people by showing that Iraq vulnerable to damage by the allied forces.

Other diplomats and experts who had earlier conclu that a delayed defeat might be labelled by Saddam and m of the Arab world as a "victory", are wondering if tenacious Iraqi leader had not made some smart polit calculations as well: for instance, the longer it takes for a victory, the tougher it would be for the Bush Administra to dispel popular fears that America was slipping another Vietnam. According to an Arab diplomat, Sad may even have calculated that this in turn might d

THINK TANKS

A New Order

WHILE most Americans are vociferously ha ish about the war, others were loudly suppor of allowing more time for the sanctions to w But the anti-war protests in many parts of the cou have mostly fallen silent in the prevailing moo showing solidarity with the soldiers, particularly Iraq's display of battered prisoners of war on televis

But among the intelligentsia of Washington— "think tanks"—the debate is more esoteric, centrin Bush's promise to bring in a "new world order" Saddam Hussain has been taken care of. Jan Nola Brookings Institute, a prestigious think tank in W ington, believes the US may become severely inhibit allowing transfer of technology, particularly of variety that may be used to develop weapons.

Paul Kreisberg, senior fellow of the Carnegie End ment and authority on South Asia, dismissed prospect of any US vindictiveness towards India in

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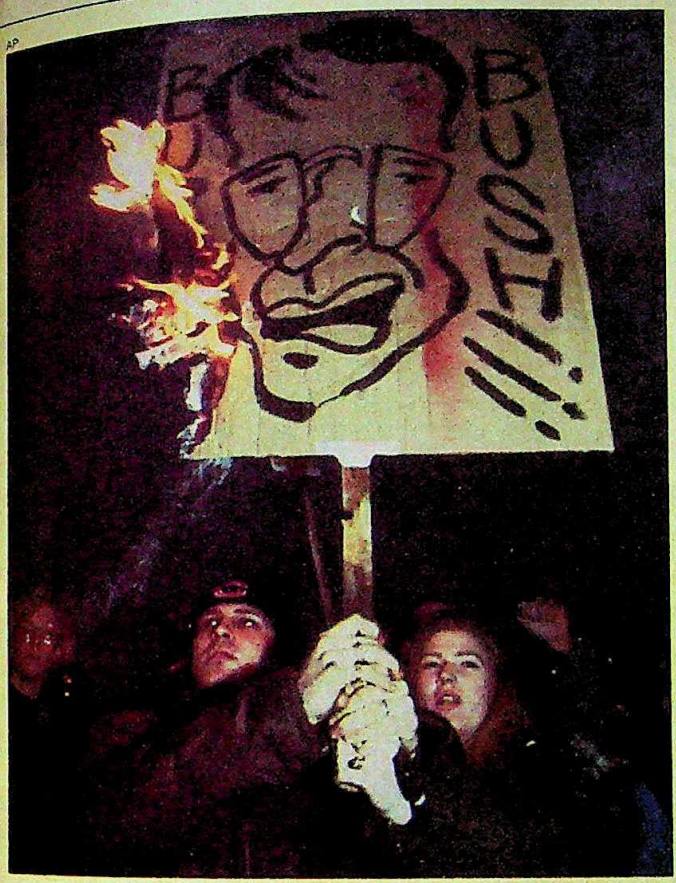

Anti-war demonstrations in the US: changing tone

Bush's popularity could plummet once the cameras start showing soldiers coming home in body bags

Washington to attempt massive ground attacks which would result in body bags going home to America and further erosion of popular support for the war and President Bush.

That some unease at the lack of decisive military results had begun to set in Washington has been more than evident from efforts by top Pentagon officials to "cool" high expectations, raised ironically by its own swaggering commanders. Top political strategists in the White House are already reported to be engaged in "spin control" of news, in a throw-back to the inelegant presidential campaign of 1988. (Spin control is political jargon for blowing up positive and miniaturising negative aspects of news.)

Thus, in an apparently orchestrated move one day last month, while George Bush himself was "pleased to report that Operation Desert Storm is right on schedule," and that allied forces had "destroyed effectively" Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological facilities, Defence Secretary Dick Cheney and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, were warning Americans that there "may well be surprises ahead". Apparently, the "spin controllers" hoped that the upbeat delivery of President Bush would cancel out the worrisome projections of his military men.

In the US itself, while the current level of support for the war is still high, a sampling in the streets of New York City showed this does not necessarily extend to next month or next week. While Bush may have the all-out support of the American people for the moment, there is always the danger of their patience running out. Said Shirley Bostick, a store clerk: "I am supporting Bush with my fingers crossed. I don't know if it'll continue if our boys get stuck in that lousy desert and start dying." Salesman Michael Brody was even more direct: "This better be over quick. Let Bush bomb every Iraqi. I have a cousin over there in the desert, and don't want him shedding no blood because Bush can win the next election." Taxi driver Steve Strudd was succinct: "Bush couldn't wait to start this war. He'd better hustle to finish it."

The war-by-TV is a two-edged sword. Since January 16, Bush's popularity has been rising. But this could face a disastrous reversal if cameras leave Scuds and Tomahawks and Patriots to focus instead on body bags arriving home, if and when that happens.

—AMRIT KAKARIA in New York

Gulf war aftermath. He believes that Bush's "new world order" would translate into some sort of regional security arrangement like a Gulf Council under UN auspices, and not a CENTO. Other experts, like Michael Mendelbaum, of Johns Hopkins University, predict that the most important aspect of the aftermath for the Third World would be a drop in oil prices. There is near universal agreement that US interest in the Third World, so far driven by rivalry with the USSR, may undergo a sea change. Ties with Pakistan, in this context, avers Mendelbaum, could "gradually weaken" and those with India strengthen.

Abe Rosenthal, former executive editor of *The New York Times* and its present columnist, was disappointed with India's role as a "passive partner" of Saddam. He said India "has not exactly covered itself with glory" in dealing with the Gulf war and "might" face difficulties in relations with the US. What would he have liked India to do? "It should have behaved in the tradition of Nehru: expressed its opinion on the invasion of one country by another," was Rosenthal's advice. However, the future would "depend less on what he (Bush) wants than what will happen," he added.

—AMRIT KAKARIA in New York

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fellow Islamic underdog is growing. Personally, Saddam has been hated for long in Egypt. Today the ordinary Egyptian has more specific complaints with him. Their army has been drawn into war. The tourist season is finished as, because of the rear of terrorist attacks, the Government has even blocked entry to the Pyramids and locked up the museums. Yet, as the allied offensive gets more intense, a growing streak of sympathy is visible. "It's an Arab problem that should have been left to the Arabs to sort out," said Adnan, a Cairo University research scholar. In neighbouring Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories the mood is almost fanatically pro-Saddam. Initially, as reports of the first air assaults came in, Palestinians were stunned, not even stirring to look out of the windows at the Israeli soldiers

ENVIRONMENT

Marginal Effect

MOST alarmist reports about the ecological impact of the war assume that if the oil wells are torched, a huge amount from three to 10 million barrels of crude would burn every day. This, says the *New Scientist* report, quoting Richard Turco of the University of California, "could release three million tonnes of black smoke into the upper atmosphere, shading up to 100 million square kilometres, more than a fifth of the planet's surface". John Cox, vice-president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, estimates about 500,000 tonnes of smoke would be generated per month. "A year-long oil well conflagration could affect the onset and character of the monsoons," he warns.

Poppycock, say Indian scientists. S.M. Kulshreshtha, director-general of the Meteorological Department, categorically states: "Whatever be the nature of the 1991 monsoon, it will be unaffected by oil well fires in the Gulf." He argues that the monsoon is a large-scale phenomenon—almost global—and is not likely to be affected by 'local' events. Moreover, the Arabian region does not play a significant part in the dynamics of the Indian monsoon, which originates south of the equator.

More than the Gulf fires, it is the oil spilt in the sea that is causing concern. Environmentalists fear that the large oil slick, which has already moved southwards, may head for India once it comes out of the Gulf.

Assuming 10 million barrels of oil are burnt daily in an area of about 1,000 sq km, the Indian scientists predict the following fall-out of the Gulf fires:

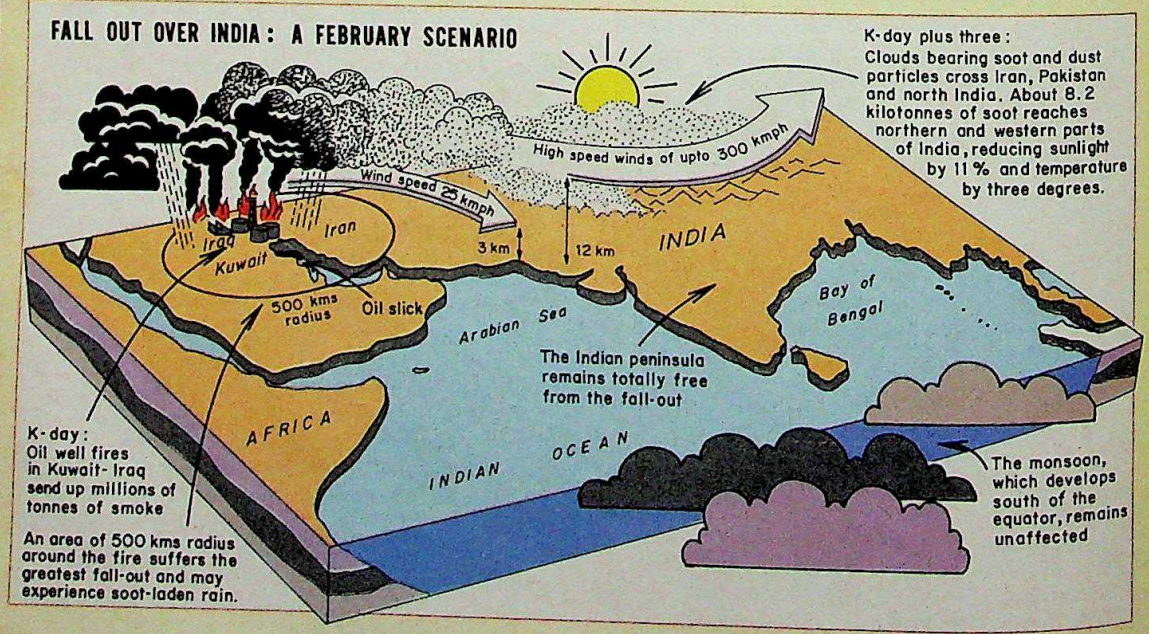
► Smoke that rises up to 3 km will stay in the neighbourhood, extending to a radius of 500 km. This is because winds at this level are low—of the magnitude of up to 15 knots (20 to 30 kmph) and move within the area.

► Smoke between the height of three and 12 km will be transported very quickly towards the east. Because in January-March, the winds blow from the west to the east and will cross over to north India. The wind speeds at this height can go as high as 150 knots (300 kmph). Hence, the smoke will come over India, and even blow further east quickly, thus dissipating the mass of smoke.

► If, however, the oilfire storm also raises vast quantities of dust, it is likely to remain in the atmosphere and could cut off some amount of sunlight and marginally reduce temperatures over north India. Says Dr N.K. Jaswal, director of the Institute for Systems Studies and Analyses: "The loss of sunlight in western parts of India would be about 11 per cent and would be similar to cloudy days. Temperatures may go down by two or three degrees. There may also be some rain. But these are unlikely to have any effect on agriculture."

Dr S.K. Sinha, a specialist on global climatic changes at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, estimates that the winter crop of wheat and barley may actually benefit from these changes. Says he: "The grain development period will be extended. The crop may take a longer time to ripen, but it will be good." —W.P.S. SIDHU

Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



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Tuesday	Sikkim Express WEEKLY LOTTERY	FIRST PRIZE : Rs. 1 Lakh TICKET : Re. 1/-
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Thursday	WEEKLY Sikkim STATE LOTTERY	FIRST PRIZE : Rs. 1 Lakh TICKET : Re. 1/-
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Friday	Sikkim Laxmi WEEKLY LOTTERY	FIRST PRIZE : Rs. 1 Lakh TICKET : Re. 1/-
Saturday	KUBER WEEKLY LOTTERY	FIRST PRIZE : Rs. 1 Lakh TICKET : Re 1/-
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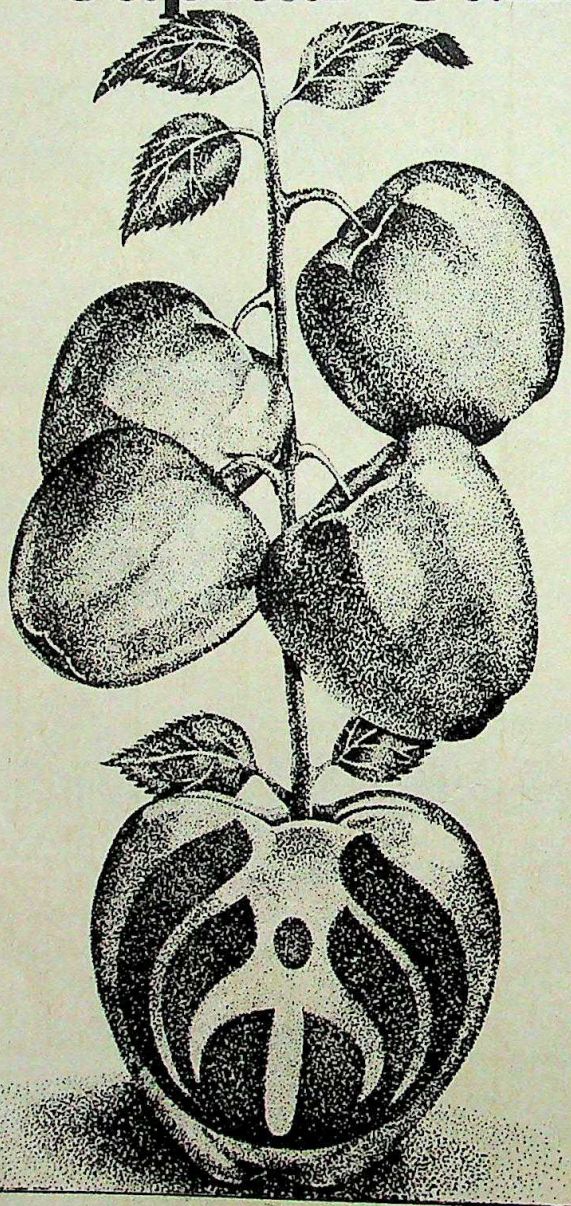

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AFP

British army engineers blast a minefield along the Kuwaiti desert

The ground war will be as much a test of will and technology as of raw guts and the ability to absorb losses. In terms of manpower, Iraq enjoys superiority, but the average Iraqi soldier should not be rated too highly.

enforcing the curfew. But the moment the first missiles fell on Israel the depression was replaced by euphoria as many came out on the streets to the accompaniment of "*bil dam, rooh dam nasdikiya saddam*". (We'll give you blood, we'll give you soul, we'll give you all we have, Saddam). Saddam may be faulted on moral grounds. But politically, his moves have been shrewd and calculated. To deflect attention from his own annexation of Kuwait, he has effectively exhumed many old ghosts and reopened raw Arab wounds. Palestine, Pan-Arabism and the distrust between the rich oil-Arabs and non-oil Arabs are old fires that Saddam has rekindled. To add fuel to this he has deftly used anti-Americanism and Islam. The last thing the Americans now want is this rampant growth of the Saddam cult which could turn a military victory into political defeat.

This, the Islamisation of Saddamism, is a phenomenon as ironical as it is worrisome for the West. "It is a paradox that Saddam is now projecting himself as an Islamic leader," says Said Sonbol, editor-in-chief of Cairo's state-owned daily *Al Akhbar*. Sonbol explains that Saddam is a Ba'athist and not an Islamic leader "and thus all this talk of jehad is so unreal". But among the Muslims, and the Arabs in particular, it sounds all so sweet and real. As a top Jordanian

THE LIGHTER SIDE

Caught in the midst of a hopeless war people haven't lost their sense of humour. In Baghdad, a poster shows Bush, in shorts and a Hawaiian shirt, standing next to an all-American barbecue, roasting a skewered dove of peace. Jordanians say they are caught between Iraq and a hard place. The Iraqi media and officials often pronounce Bush as "Boosh" which is a local obscenity. Some other samples:

- **How do the Kuwaitis say *Bismillah* in the morning: Bushmillah.**
- **How do the Palestinians say *salam alelkum*: Saddam *alelkum*.**
- **Why are the Israelis stacking salami in their bomb shelters? Because Saddam is sending them free mustard (mustard gas).**
- **Saddam was worried about his son Udey's poor English. So he called the chief of Mukhabrat, his intelligence service, and asked who the best English tutor in Iraq was.**

"Ibrahim, at Baghdad University," said the spy chief.

"Get Ibrahim," ordered Saddam.

The next evening, Saddam remembered the tutor and called the intelligence chief. "What happened to Ibrahim?" he asked.

"No problem, sir. We got him. We interrogated him. He confessed. We shot him."

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official said, you have to be an Arab to understand Saddam's appeal. In four decades of warfare an Arab aircraft has not penetrated Israeli air space to hit Tel Aviv. Today the Israelis sit cowering in their shelters as he rains Scuds over them.

THE DECISIVE PHASE

DOES PEACE HAVE A CHANCE?

As war moves into its critical phase, rival plans and strategies are clear. The Americans want a quick, and relatively bloodless victory. The Iraqis' priority is to deny them victory and, if that is not possible, to raise costs to such a level that it becomes embarrassingly expensive. For the Americans, a crucial question is, how long can they continue to control their media to prevent

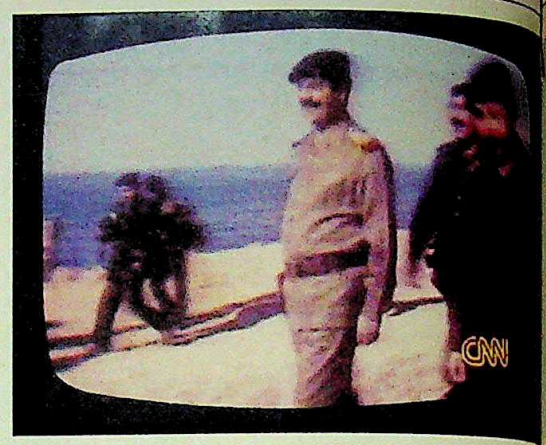
Saddam posters selling in Karachi

An anti-US wave is sweeping the Islamic world forcing the US to bring a quick end to the war.

domestic public opinion from turning hostile. Americans would like to be done with it all before too many wailing widows appear on television. Also for the allies any victory against Saddam will be meaningless if it is accompanied by the building of the man, dead or alive, as an Arab-Islamic cult figure. It could lead to the growth of radical Islamic movements and the overthrow of the pro-American but unelected regimes in Muslim countries.

Ironically, this itself becomes a compulsion that renders peace efforts futile. It will not be enough for the alliance if Kuwait is freed. They want Saddam destroyed so they could take care of Saddamism later. Having built himself into a 20th century Saladin, Saddam has painted himself into a corner where he must fight to the bitter end. Barring miracles the war will inevitably move into the next, bloodier and perhaps decisive phase soon, as the beaches of Kuwait echo with the cries of the Marines' Semper Fi and the Iraqis' Allah-o-Akbar to soon drown in the screams of the wounded and the dying.

Additional reporting by KANWAR SANDHU in New Delhi.



Saddam inspecting his troops

India becomes a part of the electronic global village

CNN

Hooked on War

OVERNIGHT, from being back-of-the-woods poor relatives Indians woke up with ringside seats to the hottest show in the world. The Gulf war live from bombed-out Baghdad—its sky "a million fireflies"—to Scud-ded Tel-Aviv to Stars and Stripes America. They sold children with "Operation Desert Shield" T-shirts and mini-heads with "With love to Saddam" scribbled on them.

Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN), with its own two-way phone link between Baghdad and Atlanta, Georgia, was bringing the Gulf war live into the living rooms of India and over a hundred countries. As the logo 'War in the Gulf' reappeared on the screen to the ominous sound of drums, Operation Desert Storm seemed like a Hollywood production—with breaks for CNN advertising.

From Delhi to Madras there was a virtual scramble to catch this manna literally raining down from the heavens. "DD's coverage is like a Scud missile that failed to explode—a real damp squib after CNN," says N. Ravi, a businessman. Room bookings in five-star hotels hooked to CNN in Delhi, Hyderabad, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta soared. Delhi's Maurya Hotel had to impose a temporary cover charge of Rs 100 for their bar as people charged in to watch colour television. Number One, the former discotheque at Delhi's Taj Mahal hotel, became surreal with its black and white blow-ups of Hindi film stars of the silent era looking down on correspondents watching CNN.

Hyderabad's Hotel Asrani International had to hire an additional 12 rooms a day after the war broke out for those wanting CNN. In Madras people walked into hotels with dish antennae. At midnight there were almost 200 people watching CNN in the office of Silicon Valley Corporation which manufactures dish antennae.

Whether it was the President's house watching video tapes made for the President's Secretary P. Murari or Bibhuti Banerji, 50, who runs a school in Atul in Gujarat, they were watching the war through CNN. Move over BBC. B

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The debris of a Scud missile: dish antennae brought the war right into Indian homes

Requests for dish antennae are coming in even from small towns like Rajkot as dealers run out of stocks

months after it began beaming to India CNN is becoming its television equivalent.

Certainly, the fall-out of the Gulf war spells happy times for CNN. Sudhir Damodaran of Cat Vision, a Delhi company which also makes dish antennae and claims to have the franchise for CNN in India, says that after the war began they are putting up three dish antennae a day in Delhi—earlier it was barely one a day.

Inquiries at Cat Vision's Bombay office are pouring in from middle class housing colonies to businessmen like Nusli Wadia and the Tatas. Many corporate giants in Bombay are now linking up to the CNN satellite: the new 18-storey residence of the Ambanis, the Vijay Mallya mansion and the Mafatlal Centre. Requests for the antennae have been coming in for dealers from Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and even smaller places like Junagadh, Dhoraji and Upleta. Says Sandhya Khanna of Electrocom System, one of the four firms dealing with dish antennae in Ahmedabad: "We have run out of stocks." The war fever's raging in Calcutta too where Channel-4 is receiving CNN and has been getting at least 30 people a day to inquire about getting a dish antenna.

Strangely, CNN first came into corporate townships already hooked to satellites. According to Damodaran, public sector townships like Fripco in Surat and BHL in Trichhinapalli, and corporate townships in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, already have the facility. Hotels followed, with Delhi taking the lead over Bombay.

CNN's next phase is to spread into residential colonies in the big cities. "We have given the franchise to receive CNN to about 25 dealers in the capital," explains Damodaran. Cat Vision provides the dish, the know-how and the technical design. The cost for an installation: about Rs 1.5 lakh.

The dealers in turn collect subscriptions from members which vary from Rs 100 to Rs 200 a month, after the installation charge ranging from Rs 300 to Rs 800. Cat Vision itself expects Rs 25 to Rs 30 per month from the dealers for each of its subscribers. Hotels, on the other hand, are expected to pay CNN directly in foreign exchange for which they get free mention on both the printed and telecast traveller's guide to CNN hotels, explains Sanjeev Hiremath, Cat Visions's western India regional manager.

What CNN actually gets is a bit hazy. There's nothing to protect CNN from individuals or hotels hooking on to the satellite by installing a C-band antennae. They are, in fact, making hay while the satellites beam down on India. Once the viewership grows, CNN plans to start scrambling its telecast, which can then be received only by using special decoders. According to Tristar's Siddharth Srivastava, decoders can be made today in which the chip is programmed to function for a fixed period after which the viewer has to purchase a new one.

CNN has also made a beginning in news-gathering from India. Srivastava has been given the responsibility for TV coverage from the region. As the Gulf war broke out he started filing the Indian reaction.

Isn't the Indian Government doing anything about the raiders in the sky? An inter-ministerial government committee was set up last summer to decide whether to legalise or ban satellites and cable TV. But no decision has yet been taken. The Department of Telecommunications issues licences both to dish antenna dealers and domestic users, charging Rs 10 per set per year. There is only one significant restriction in the licence: the licence does not authorise the licensee to do any act which is an infringement of any copyright which may exist in the matter received by means of the licensed apparatus.

Says Srivastava: "The Government can never implement a rule which is unimplementable. It's like trying to stop owners of short wave radios from listening to a foreign station." He says the Government is trying to protect itself from possible law suits by foreign TV conglomerates who may charge that it is encouraging the violation of international copyright regulations by licensing the dish antenna.

Meanwhile, the war on television—a bit like video war games—continues to fascinate Indians, even though much of it has become repetitive and clearly filtered through the perceptions of middle America. Yet last fortnight's events have shown that India's now a part of the electronic global village. In one of writer Ralph Waldo Emerson's dreams he saw the world coming towards him as he floated in space. When it came closer he saw that it was an apple and he reached out and bit it. Perhaps, the world is shrinking to seizable size.

—MADHU JAIN in Delhi and
M. RAHMAN in Bombay with bureau reports

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INDIAN ECONOMY

Thank You, Saddam

Oil prices and high external deficits force the Government to start cleaning up the self-created mess at home. But half-measures abound.

By R. JAGANNATHAN and PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

GULF WAR

IT'S belt-tightening time for everybody. Aruna Ullal, a 36-year-old medical officer with Southern Railway, is using her car less and hopping on to public transport more often. Her family may also put off a planned purchase of a video cassette recorder (VCR). "I am sure we can do without it," she says. That's bad news for Sonu Mirchandani, whose company makes Onida VCRs and television sets. He's cutting production and pinching pennies. "I now travel economy class," he says. Air India (AI) and Indian Airlines won't like that. With the Gulf war and fuel cuts already biting, AI's Acting Chairman S.R. Gupta is axing routes and capping expenditure. "We are putting off spending on cutlery and crockery. Advertising is being cut by 15 per cent," he reveals. Since other public sector companies are holding back advertising, Ravi Gupta, managing director of Trikaya-Grey Advertising, expects a slowdown. "Till the year before last the advertising industry was growing at 20 per cent. From this year I see it coming down to 7 per cent," observes Gupta.

And so the chain-reaction continues. The primary impact of the Gulf war has flattened profit curves in the petroleum-dependent industries of transport and petrochemicals; the secondary blow has laid low import-intensive manufacturing sectors like consumer durables and automobiles; at the tertiary level, almost every industry that is dependent on fuel oil, transports its products to some distances and consumes petro-based raw materials has been jostled.

Don't blame it all on Saddam Hussain. For the only problems that can be traced back to him are the country's high oil import bills (at least Rs 2,500 crore more in 1990-91), loss of exports to Iraq and Kuwait (Rs 240 crore), the foreign exchange cost of emergency repatriation of Indians from the Gulf (Rs 360 crore) and the probable loss of old Iraqi dues owed to Indian construction companies and equipment abandoned in that country (Rs 1,350 crore).

That doesn't even add up to Rs 4,500 crore, less than 1 per cent of the country's national income this year. But blaming Saddam has helped the Government push through its tough deflationary measures—higher corporate and income taxes, duty hikes and the 25 per cent petro-products price rise which will stay forever. The measures will dent the macro numbers for industrial and national income growth in 1990-91 *(see charts)*. Inflation, already a riotous two-digit affair, could move up further to 14-15 per cent by March 1991.

The sins of past profligacy have come home to roost at the inopportune moment of the external crunch. At the root of it all lies the inability of the political leadership to

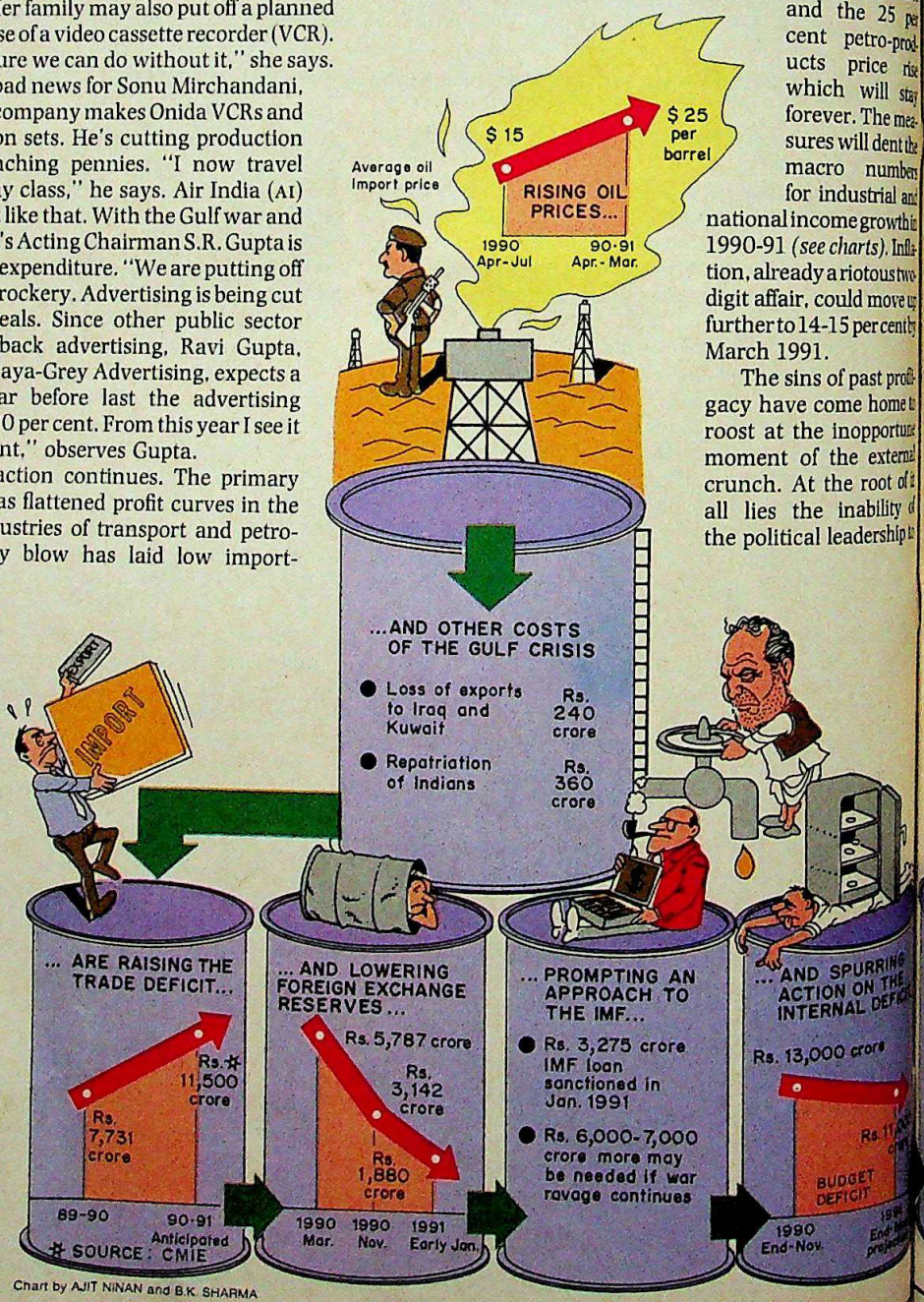

Chart by AJIT NINAN and B.K. SHARMA

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respond to the long-term structural problems of the economy with anything more than palliatives. The buzz-phrase for political opportunism has been: 'Think short-term; your successor will inherit the problems'. Consider:

▸ Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha hopes to collect Rs 750 crore this year by allowing the corporate sector to set off only three-quarters of the year's depreciation on assets against income. But the unabsorbed depreciation can be carried forward to the next year (and the ones after that) and claimed as a deduction against income. So, effectively, Sinha has collected tomorrow's taxes today. His successor will reap a depleted tax harvest.

▸ Sinha can't be faulted too much, for predecessor Madhu Dandavate had heaped an unwholesome fiscal mess on his plate. In a bid to cater to Devi Lal's favoured rural constituency, a loan waiver scheme was announced for which Dandavate provided only Rs 1,000 crore. The beneficiaries identified could gobble up four times as much government money.

▸ In another bid to transfer incomes to ruralites, a 15 per cent increase in food procurement prices in 1990 was unmatched by reductions in the fertiliser subsidies. Worse, Dandavate earmarked a mere Rs 3,250 crore for the subsidy in 1990-91 when the total bill looks like it will bloat to Rs 4,800 crore. A supplementary demand for Rs 1,100 crore put up by Agriculture Ministry bureaucrats has been shot down and subsidy payments have been held back. It'll still have to be paid, but next year when Sinha may not be around.

▸ Sinha will leave some other ticking time-bombs too. The loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) cobbled up by the Government ($1.8 billion, Rs 3,275 crore approximately), will barely see him through this year. Implication: it will be swallowed by burgeoning oil bills alone, without giving the Government time to implement a policy that will correct the persisting structural problem of external trade deficits. (India ran aggregate trade deficits—imports minus exports—of Rs 38,600 crore in 1985-90.) "I think they should have gone earlier to the IMF and raised more. We require $5-6 billion", suggests former finance minister Pranab Mukherji.

Raising that kind of big money needs real political courage and that is in particularly short supply now, given the unstable and precipitous nature of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's Janata Dal(S) minority government. Chandra Shekhar's economic agenda is essentially short-term in nature, and knee-jerk responses predominate. Take the Government's response to the Gulf crisis: all that it has done is impose fresh restrictions on imports, cut down allocations of fuel, grounded some planes and scuttled around in the international markets shopping for oil. The deflation package seems to have been designed more to prove to the IMF that the Indian Government is making some kind of serious effort to live within its means and that it intends to rigorously restrict the daunting budget deficit.

DEFICITS, VILLAIN OF THE PIECE

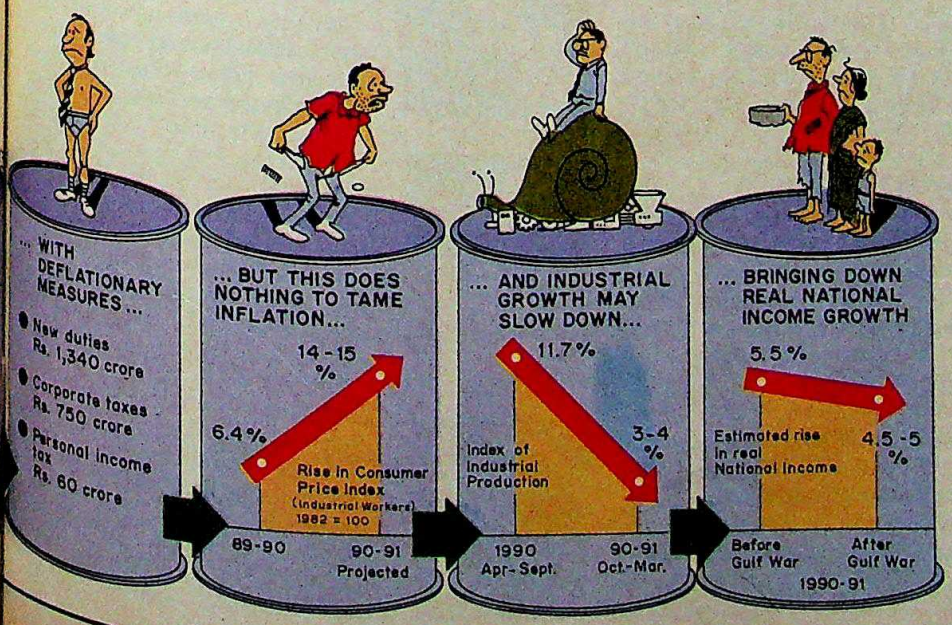
BUDGETARY deficits—arguably—lie at the root of India's macro-economic malaise. Through the seventh plan (1985-90) the Central Government has carried profligacy to the extreme. The Planning Commission had suggested that deficits should not exceed Rs 14,000 crore during the five-year period, but the Centre ended up running up a deficit anyway of nearly three times that amount. And thanks to the Gulf, 1990-91, the first year of the still-to-surface eighth plan, may have the dubious distinction of nearly equalling the originally mooted seventh plan figure.

The real villain is the revenue deficit—the gap between the Government's running expenditure and income—which has been bloating beyond recognition in recent years. Between 1985-86 and 1990-91, the revenue deficit has more than doubled from Rs 5,565 crore to Rs 13,032 crore (budgeted) and the only way the overall budgetary gap is being narrowed is by drawing from the capital budget, the money that should ideally have gone to finance projects. Instead it now just feeds the expansive army of government employees, among others.

OPTIONS

- **Sell public sector shares; i.e. privatise.**
- **Cut subsidies; Rs 9 out of Rs 100 spent is subsidy.**
- **Cut defence expenses, now gobbling up 14 per cent of Central budgets**
- **Raise taxes and cut government expenditure.**

Political flights of fancy have added to the acuteness of the burden of deficits. One example is the rural loan waiver scheme that will saddle the Centre with a Rs 4,000 crore bill. The states will have to shell out another Rs 1,000 crore. Since waivers only encourage the thrifty to renege on their own loan repayments, the ultimate price may well be the stability of the banking system. As the nations's biggest banker—the Centre owns the bulk of the banking industry—the resultant



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mess may still land up on the Government's table, which brings the problem back in a circuitous way. The wages of populism is an inescapable financial albatross.

IF YOU CAN'T EARN, BORROW

SINCE the Government can't earn enough to make ends meet, it does the next easy thing: borrow. In recent years the Centre has borrowed like mad, and roughly a quarter of the money it garners comes as loans. Gross internal market borrowings were a hefty Rs 35,730 crore in the seventh plan.

Adding all short- and long-term debt, 1990-91 finds the Centre in hock to its citizens to the tune of over Rs 133,536 crore: over Rs 150 for every man, woman and child in the country. If the state governments are brought into the picture, the figure could double.

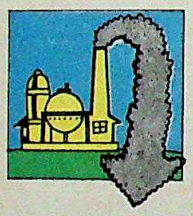
But to pass the hat around for so much money, the Centre has had to raise interest rates on its loans all around: from an average of 6-7 per cent in the early '80s to 11-12 per cent in the late '80s. Not surprisingly, it is raising more and more cash just to repay old loans. Back-of-the-envelope calculations show that this year more than a third of tax revenues will be going to pay back what the Government owes its citizens. In other words, the Government is collecting taxes from you to pay back what belongs to you.

The borrowing isn't just going on at home. As on March 1990, India's total external debt totalled a whopping Rs 81,000-and-odd crore, of which 30 per cent represented commercial borrowings. All this is exacting a heavy toll in terms of the repayment burden, for which precious foreign exchange has to be earmarked.

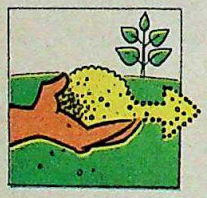
OPTIONS

- Cut interest rates; but this will affect banks.
- Get public sector to raise money from the market.
- Set a constitutional limit on borrowings as a percentage of national income.
- Mop up black money through low interest bonds.

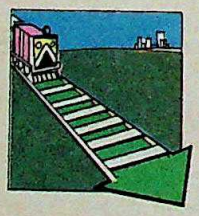
WHO IS AFFECTED



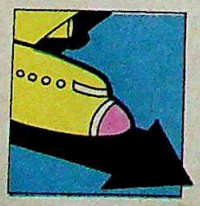
PETROCHEMICALS
Consumption of five commodity plastics is expected to fall by 14 per cent in 1990-91 due to the combined impact of raw material prices and weak demand.



FERTILISER
No direct impact as the returns are assured. In case of resource stringency and subsidy payment delays, cash flows are hit. More working capital costs can impact profits.

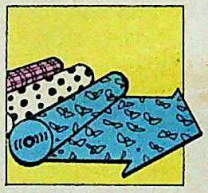


RAILWAYS
Fuel costs are higher by Rs 150 crore at least in 1990-91. Thus the projected budget surplus of Rs 186 crore will more or less vanish into thin air this year.



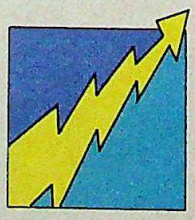
AIRLINES
The two carriers, Air India and Indian Airlines, are expected to lose over Rs 200 crore each, due to the Gulf repatriation costs, hiked fuel charges and curtailed flights.

AUTOMOBILES
Production of cars declined in the first 10 months of 1990 for Maruti, Premier and Hindustan Motors by 1,000 each over last year's figures. Prospects continue to be cloudy.

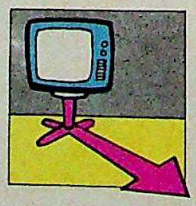


TEXTILES
Polyester staple fibre consumption growth may halve to 7 per cent in 1990-91 and polyester filament yarn may actually fall 5-7 per cent. Nylon filament yarn offtake may decline.

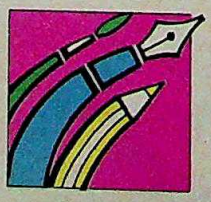
CEMENT
With prices shooting up in a shortage scenario, higher costs impact will be passed on to the consumer. The super profits anticipated in 1990-91 may not be dented much.



INFRASTRUCTURE
The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy expects power generation in 1990-91 to rise 8 per cent (2.7 per cent below target) and coal output by 4.6 per cent.



CONSUMER DURABLES
The general weakening of demand in key areas like television sets has clouded the fortunes of the entertainment electronics sector, especially TVs.



ADVERTISING
The slowdown in demand for products like consumer goods and industrial cost-cutting will reduce growth rates. A fall from an annual 20 per cent to single-digits is likely.

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YAWNING EXTERNAL GAP

THE price of overspending at home has to be paid abroad sometimes. Reason: increased government deficits lead to a mirror-image deficit on the external front as well for increased government spending sucks in more imports. Last fortnight's Rs 3,275-crore loan from the IMF pulled the country's precarious balance of payments from the brink of disaster. Just how desperate the situation was can be gauged from the fact that India's hard currency reserves had slumped from a hardly-noteworthy Rs 3,000 crore in mid-December to a miserable Rs 2,000 crore in early-January, a level barely equal to two weeks' import requirements. Rock-bottom couldn't have gotten lower.

"If you don't have money, you don't have time (to adjust)," says Bimal Jalan, who heads the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council. But the IMF money is peanuts when confronted with the gaping hole in the country's external trade. In 1985-90, the aggregate trade gap—imports minus exports—was a massive Rs 38,600 crore. This year's could end up being nearly a third of that five-year total.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, total imports are likely to clamber up by over Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 45,500 crore this year. This, despite the Government clamp down on imports of capital goods, raw materials and components by around Rs 1,500 crore. Widening the trade gap, exports this year are likely to fall short of the Rs 36,000-crore target by at least Rs 2,000 crore.

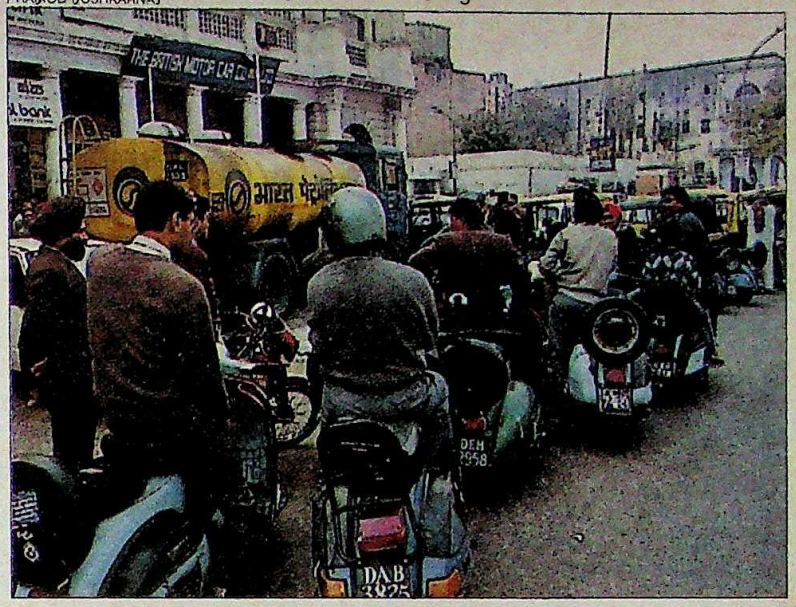
Since trade gaps have to be bridged by higher remittances from abroad—an iffy proposition since the Gulf exploded—or greater borrowing, an external debt trap looms. In any case, since September 1990 there have been apprehensions about India's ability to go in for higher commercial borrowings following the downgrading of the country's credit rating by an American agency. Meanwhile, the Government continues to woo non-resident Indians (NRIs), whose aggregate deposits currently exceed Rs 18,000 crore. The Foreign Currency Non-Resident deposits scheme has been further liberalised.

Economists wonder if the IMF's prescription for addressing the balance of payments problem—namely, a cut in customs tariffs and further devaluation of the rupee—will work. "I'm not very hopeful of the trade gap narrowing—if current trends continue, external debt servicing costs as a proportion of export earnings may increase from around 27 per cent at present to 50 per cent by the end of the '90s," feels B.B. Bhattacharya of New Delhi's Institute of Economic Growth.

To an extent, the external payments crunch could have been alleviated by a larger inflow of foreign investment. But a Coke-and-Pepsi bashing ethos—politicians are still fighting the multinational dragon—cannot bring in the dollar investor. In 1990, foreign investment approvals have dramatically slumped to only Rs 128.3 crore from Rs 316.7 crore last year.

OPTIONS

- **Provide more sops to exporters.**
- **Squeeze imports at risk of slowing industry.**
- **Open doors to foreign firms, cut red tape.**
- **Step up utilisation of foreign aid (unused portion: Rs 44,000 crore); but this needs matching rupees.**



■ **Queue for petrol in New Delhi: panic reaction**

THE INFLATION DRAGON

BUT the real dragon is inflation—and one that politicians really fear. Reason: it erodes popular support. And it makes no sense to compare India's double-digit inflation rate with Latin American triple-digit ones; even a marginal rise in official price indices translates into sharp income erosion.

OPTIONS

- **Continue the squeeze on money supply.**
- **Link wage hike to productivity to control price rise.**
- **Allow external competition to deter price hikes.**
- **Avoid the easy route of raising administered prices of steel, coal to raise resources.**

During the '80s, India saw double-digit inflation in three years as measured by the consumer price index: 1980-81, 1981-82, and 1983-84. The average rise in consumer prices during the decade was 9 per cent. This year, prices are expected to rise by around 14-15 per cent.

But one thing a money squeeze cannot do is moderate wage increases in a system of automatic adjustments to rises in price indices through the dearness allowance (DA) mechanism. According to a study by S. Hajra, senior economist at the Economic and Scientific Research Foundation, "demand pull" factors have contributed to more than 88 per cent of the rise in consumer prices in recent years. And the most important of such factors is the Government's policy of increasing the money wages of its employees through variable DA. Between 1985 and 1989, for example, money wages of public sector employees jumped by 52.6 per cent even though the Consumer Price Index rose just 29.5 per cent. Recently the Government raised the administered prices of steel to compensate for higher

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costs, including wage bills. Coal prices too are slated to rise shortly. That's wage-price spiral in action. It is unlikely that inflation can be checked without a cap on government expenditure. But this is politically difficult to manage.

OIL ON THE BOIL

CONTRIBUTING to all the inflation has been the international oil scenario. World crude prices, after crashing by $8-10 a barrel at the end of the first day of the Gulf war, started firming up five days later as the prospects of a prolonged conflagration became real. Still, crude should sell at an average of less than $25 a barrel unless oilfields and refineries suffer major damage. The production loss of 4 million barrels a day from Kuwait and Iraq since August 2 has been more than made up by other countries. Besides, the world is swimming in oil: commercial stocks exceed 4,000 million barrels and the US Government's strategic stocks are nearly 600 million barrels—all adding up to almost 100 days of world consumption needs. If the forces of demand and supply had their way, oil prices would be reigning below the July level of $16-17 a barrel. But they're not. Speculative futures traders control spot prices; psychological expectations rule them.

For India, every dollar increase in the per barrel price of crude depletes foreign exchange coffers by Rs 400 crore in a year. Though Kuwait and Iraq were supplying nearly 40 per cent of the country's import requirements before the war, supplies are not a problem. Besides, the Soviets, the Saudis and the Malaysians agreed to higher supplies on deferred payments.

Soon after the Gulf crisis erupted, India went on a shopping spree that, with hindsight, can be categorised as a panic reaction. In August, September and October, when crude oil prices peaked, India made spot purchases at average prices of around $30. The prices have since fallen, and haste may have led to foreign exchange waste. But as S.L. Khosla, currently chairman of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) admits, three months ago "I had told the Planning Commission that the average import price would be around $30 a barrel for 1990-91 and that the country should be prepared to import at $50 in early-1991." Today, Khosla says the 1990-91 average will be around $25. And that the next year's figure may well be $20, if damage to Kuwaiti oilfields is contained.

There are enough people who say that the country should have contracted for more crude in April and May when world prices were below $15 a barrel. But storage capacity is limited to 45 days' consumption, only half of which is onshore. The other half has to be in transit. Critics of the Government's petroleum policies have suggested that India could have saved money if it had been able to set up more refineries. Thus it could have bought crude instead of finished—and costlier—final products. The other view is that extra refining capacity only saves the country the refiners' margins. And since refiners' margins the world over had collapsed through the better part of the '80s due to excess capacity, India did right in importing more products instead of establishing new refining capacity.

OPTIONS

- **If import prices cross the $35 mark per barrel, enforce rationing.**
- **Make it attractive for foreign firms to prospect oil.**
- **Encourage coal and power substitution.**
- **Stress public transport.**

But the war has changed all and refiners' margins have jumped more than threefold in the last six months.

The money for the new refineries could have come from the oil industry's surplus but the Government has liberally dipped into it to reduce its budget deficits. The amount transferred in the 1989-90 budget alone was Rs 2,300 crore. "These amounts would have served us well in this crisis," says former petroleum secretary Lovraj Kumar.

The opinion can be debated, but one thing is clear: the Gulf war has focussed attention on the need to conserve fuel. It will also spur efforts to increase gas use and inter-fuel substitution (like converting coal to gas and gas into middle distillates like kerosene and diesel).

IF the Gulf inbroglio has achieved anything, it is this: it has helped the Government take the tough measures it should have taken anyway—reduce budget deficits, deflate the economy and start limbering up for external competition to push exports. If oil prices come back to their old levels (around $15-16 a barrel) by March, it will give the finance minister a big helping of cash. Reason: the recently raised petro-product prices will swell the oil industry's kitty by Rs 5,000-6,000 crore and Yashwant Sinha can swipe that amount to cut deficits to 6.5 per cent of the gross domestic product from over 8 per cent now—something the IMF would appreciate.

Otherwise, the options narrow again to additional taxation and cutting government expenditure. The Government cannot go on taxing indefinitely for the macro indices were beeping caution signals of a slowdown even before Saddam Hussain walked into Kuwait. For example, new investment proposals, exports, and tax collections have all been falling in recent months *(see chart)*. Higher taxes are thus the easy option that the Government may have to tread cautiously on. The chances are high that the country won't experience a fourth successive good monsoon. The budget—now only a few weeks away—will tell how far the Government has begun to alter its short-term crisis-oriented thinking. It is only the long-term that is amenable to policy control. In the short-term, Mr Hussain and Mr Monsoon may have a greater say in directing the Indian economy.

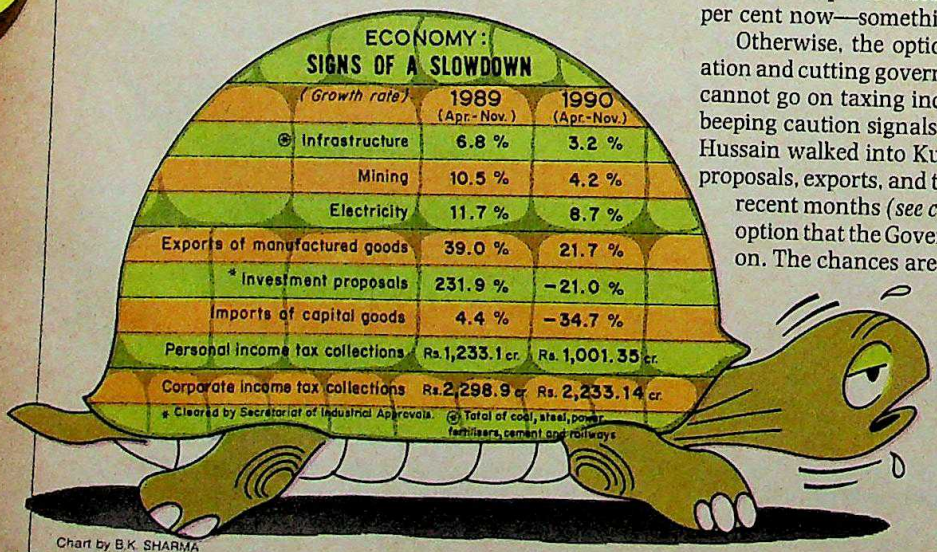

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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Objectives and Options

By GENERAL KRISHNASWAMY SUNDARJI

GULF WAR

THE Gulf war has started, and as of this writing, the allied air offensive is in full swing and the ground action is yet to be joined. The Iraqis have fired off a few conventionally armed missiles on five occasions at Israel, which has not retaliated as yet. Its cabinet is reported to have decided that it can only truly depend upon itself and will have to retaliate. All that can be said now is, that Israel is unlikely to do anything which may hasten the splitting of the allied coalition, by forcing the Arab and the Muslim members out prematurely.

US Military Strategy: The main aim and the one authorised by the UN Security Council is to get Iraq out of Kuwait. The aim 'plus' as far as the US is concerned, is to achieve this as soon as possible, and also to ensure that Iraq's nuclear potential, chemical, biological and conventional military capabilities are destroyed. This is not, however, an UN authorised aim.

These aims have to be achieved by methods duly harmonised with the need to ensure that certain terms of reference are also met. These are:

- Avoid splitting the alliance, by keeping the Arab and other Muslim members in. This would involve coercing, cajoling or somehow ensuring that Israel would modulate its response to the inevitable Iraqi provocations, so that the alliance is not torn apart.
- Take least personnel casualties, so that there is no repetition in the US of the 'Vietnam reaction'.
- Prevent a long war, so that home opinion does not sour, and minimum time is given to the inevitable divergence of 'street opinion' from 'regime policy' in the autocratic Arab and Muslim states of the coalition.

Methods: Kill Saddam Hussain as a result of the air action, or hope that he is replaced by a coup engendered as a result of the opening phases of the military operations. This would be the leitmotif which would run through the entire operation, and its consummation would modify the balance of the plan. The first phase of the plan is the highly accurate and massive air attack, initially aimed at achieving 'air superiority', where allied forces would be able to operate without interference by Iraqi air and missile power. This superiority would in normal circumstances be required for specific durations depending upon ground operations. In this case, however, I believe that the US would be aiming for 'air supremacy' a la the later stages of World War II. This would knock out Iraqi air, missile and air defence capabilities in an open-ended time and spatial frame. Phase two would be the continuation of the air offensive, aiming at the attrition of the ground warfare

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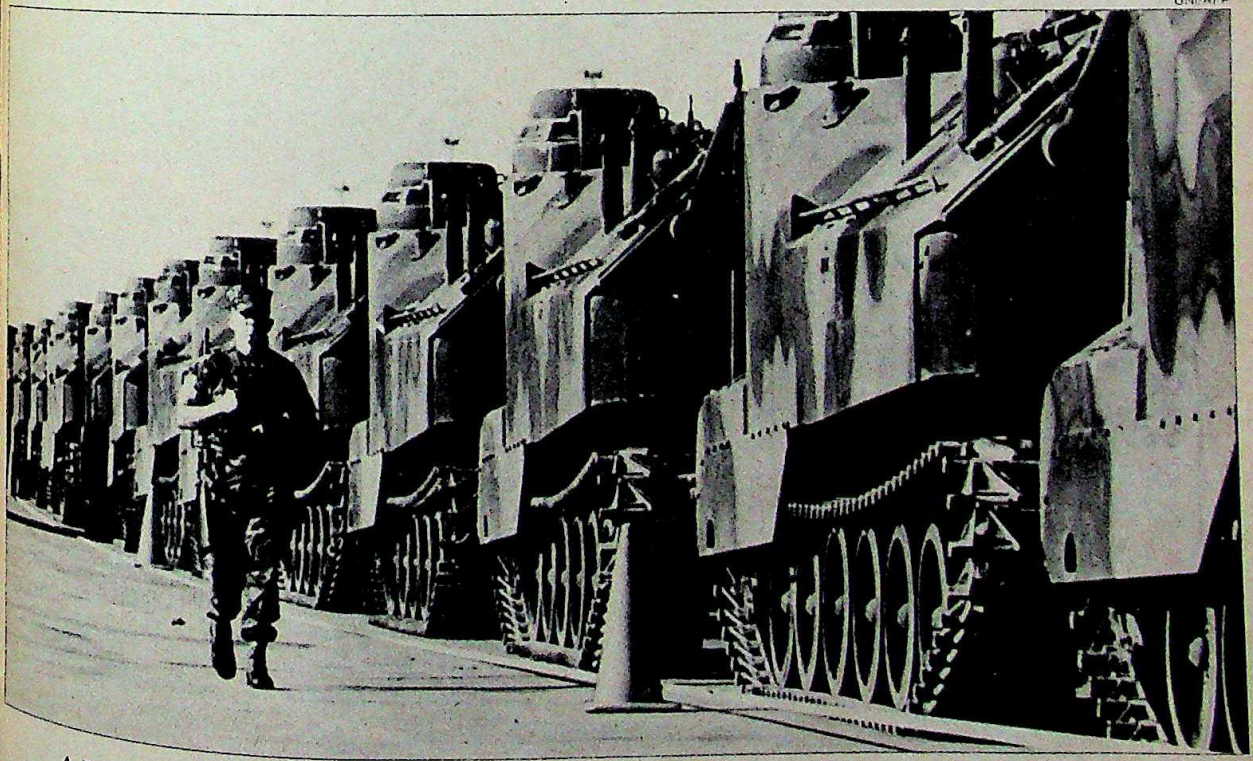

A US Marine walks past a column of armoured assault vehicles in Saudi Arabia: unequal war

Apart from trying to involve Israel, the other option Saddam has is to try his best not to let the US gameplan unfold exactly as planned, maximising the alliance strengths and minimising their weaknesses.

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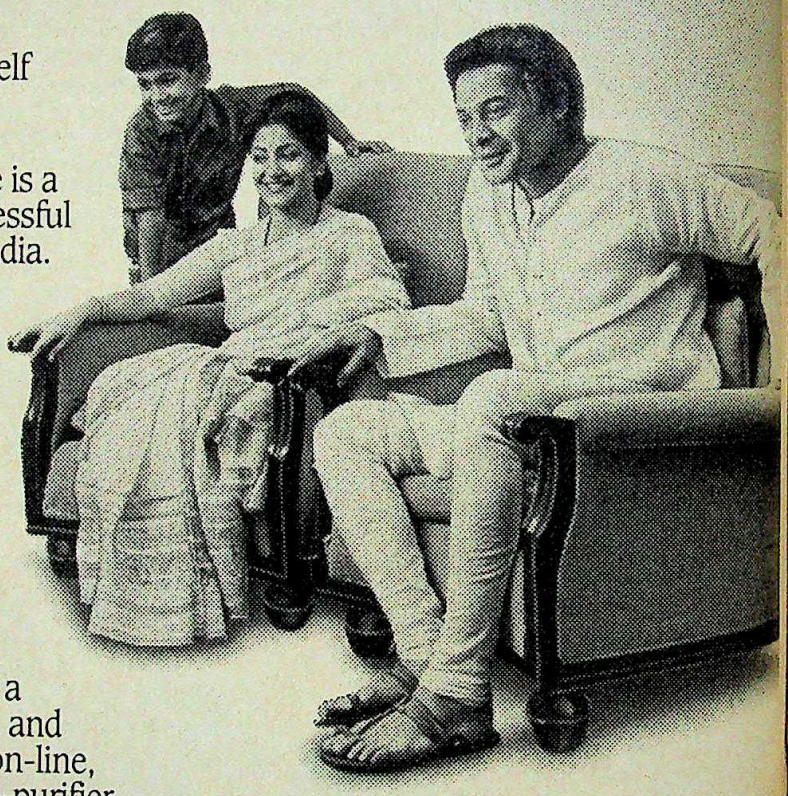
He has two unique products to demonstrate: EUROCLEAN all-purpose cleaning system, which is much more than a vacuum cleaner, and AQUAGUARD on-line, water filter-cum-purifier.



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assets of the Iraqis. This would include their tank forces; artillery; command-control-communications intelligence (C³I) systems; logistics dumps and systems; and troops in defences. The aim would be to degrade the physical ability of the Iraqis to conduct a ground war, and to lower the morale of the enemy troops and their leadership. I believe that the effect of this attrition would be considerable, but air attacks have to be kept up.

How long then can the US keep up this air offensive against the ground warfare capability of the Iraqis? First, is a straight dollar consideration, at say one billion dollars per day—how much can be afforded? Second, and perhaps more important, what are the levels of stockpiles of the expendable armaments?

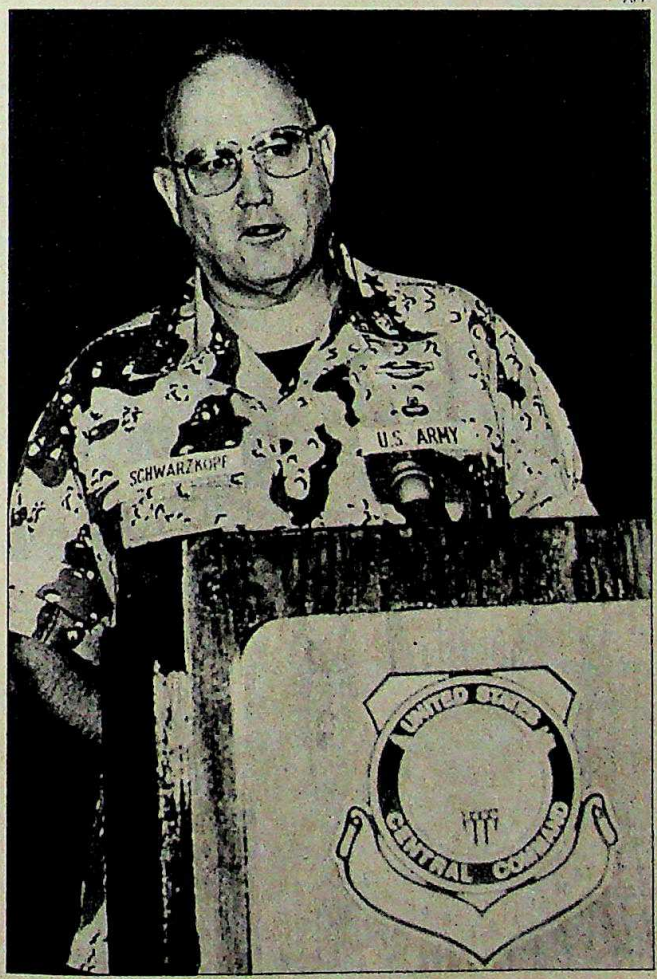
Concurrent with phases one and two would be phase three: psychological warfare (psywar) on troops in the field to lower their morale and will to fight. Psywar against the leadership at levels below Saddam Hussain, emphasising the futility of continuing operations, would be undertaken with a view to engendering a coup. If none of this works, and if time is running out, undertake phase four: a ground attack into Kuwait. This would be confined to Kuwait. This would stay within the UN mandate and not strain the cohesion of the alliance. It is also possible that Iraqi territory is attacked from an early stage for alleged tactical or operational compulsions. Or it may sequentially follow the liberation of Kuwait, because Saddam is still in power and Iraqi military potential for the post-war period has not been degraded adequately by air action alone. At any stage of the above, if Saddam either dies or is overthrown, and the successor regime appears tractable, proclaim a ceasefire and negotiate termination of the war.

Comparison of Forces: The alliance forces have across the board a very marked technological edge, as they are fielding systems with the technologies of the '80s and '90s. Iraqi systems by and large are vintage Soviet systems of the '60s and '70s. Quantitatively also, the alliance has a marked edge in the air including missiles, and at sea. In the land forces Iraq enjoys a quantitative edge, particularly in manpower. However, I do not rate the Iraqi soldier very highly, notwithstanding recent battle experience. Their showing against the poorly equipped and led, but highly motivated Iranian youngsters does not inspire confidence in Iraq having a battle experienced and tough soldiery. When in the final analysis the issue has to be settled by ground action, the soldiers' willingness to close with the enemy, to do and to dare and to die is a quality that cannot be replaced by technological or force multiplier quick fixes. But, from the Iraqi point of view, looking at the quality of the ground troops of the alliance should give them heart.

FOR barring the Pakistani and British troops with their regimental traditions, and the US Marine Corps with their traditional elan, I do not think the other infantry and tank soldiers will be very much better than the Iraqis.

Saddam's Options: The political options pre-hostilities which might have precluded their start, are now academic and are not worth considering now. In any overall reckoning, Iraqi forces are at a marked disadvantage compared to those of the US and its allies. They are pitted against the alliance in a conventional war in a defined area of terrain, with recognisable fronts, flanks, rear and is not the nebulous battle field of Vietnam where guerilla tactics could nullify massive relative strength advantages on the part of organised forces. Therefore any conventional war fought with the superior forces of the alliance, will over time end in the inevitable defeat of Iraq. I believe that Saddam has the following two options:

AFP



Chief of US Task Force Norman Schwarzkopf

The Americans know they must avoid a long war. Finally, what matters is a soldier's willingness to die.

► Politicise the military action by getting Israel involved and the alliance split. He has made five attempts at this by his conventionally armed missile attacks on Israel, but Israel has thus far not retaliated. If involving Israel is that important, why did he not greatly increase the probability by the use of chemical nerve gas warheads? Some believe that he has not succeeded in developing such warheads for his missiles, but most analysts discount this. The real reason may be apprehension of an Israeli nuclear response. It is an accepted fact that Israel has up to 200 nuclear weapons, with delivery means ranging from aircraft to the missiles 'Jericho 1' and 'Jericho 2' which between them cover the whole of Iraq. Responding with nukes to a chemical attack is credible, as the Iraqis do not have a nuclear capability presently, which could in turn threaten Israel. However, this would bring the Israeli nuclear capability into the open, immediately unify the Arabs and bust the alliance

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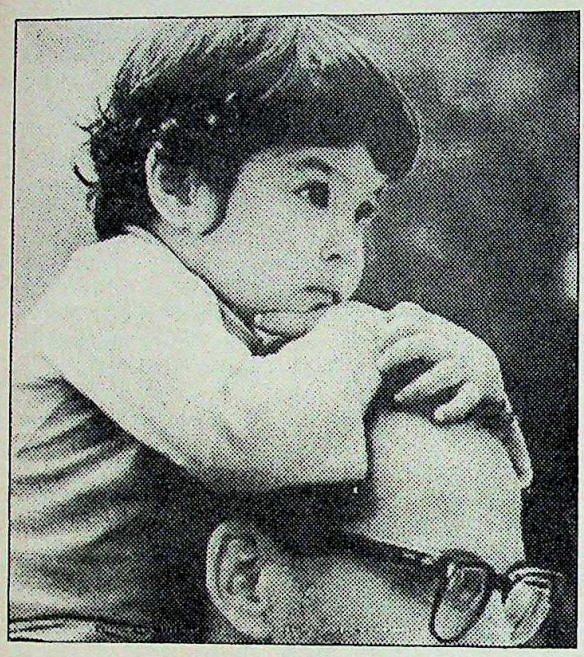

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and might even cause an Islamic reaction which might bring the Pakistani nuclear capability into the West Asian equation and escalate the war further.

▶ If muddying the issue with Israeli involvement does not bring the war to an end, the other option is to try his best not to let the US gameplan unfold exactly as planned, maximising the alliance strengths and minimising their weaknesses. Saddam must exploit the weaknesses of the alliance. Make the war last as long as possible, force a ground war before his forces are degraded by the attrition of a long phase of aerial preparation. Ensure that the US forces suffer as many personnel casualties as possible. Tune and intensify his psywar so that the separation of the 'street opinion' from 'regime policy' gets accentuated adequately for embarrassing the alliance at the minimum, to ensuring that the war stops because of the loss of base areas in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. And hope that this would bring the unequal war to an end before Iraq is brought to its knees. This might give it a chance of ending hostilities with a face-saving compromise. With Iraq retaining a part of Kuwait, Babiyan and Warba islands, and part of Rumaila oilfields.

US Grand Strategy: The Gulf war is not World War II. It is not going to last for six years, and it does not give a long time for the US to work out the kind of peace it is looking for in West Asia at the end of the war. This clear realisation is vital if the war aims and conduct of the war are to be in consonance with the peace sought. The desired peace must take into account factors which one hopes the US has recognised in the second half century of its world leadership. However unpalatable, the very short remaining 'shelf life' of feudal autocratic regimes and regimes which are abject lackeys of the West and are out of tune with resurgent nationalism, have to be cranked into the equation. If the US sheds its short-term hang-ups and gives rein to its native idealisms, which have taken a back seat during the forty-five years after World War II, one feels certain that it will be stunned, stupefied and surprised by the enthusiastic and positive response it will receive from the majority of the world.

GULF WAR

POST-WAR SCENARIO

No Pax Americana

By HENRY KISSINGER

WHEN I first heard that the war had begun, I thought of President Bush. In a movie, people run around during a crisis, picking up telephones and yelling instructions. In a real crisis, the top people are very much alone. Many officials head for the foxholes, occasionally throwing out memoranda designed to absolve them of responsibility for their actions. Usually there are only two or three people willing to make tough decisions. President Bush has earned the nation's gratitude for his fortitude in holding the coalition together during the months of buildup, gaining Congressional backing and steering the country to the point where allied and domestic support coincided. But even in the best-planned operation, there are hours in which a leader in his position must wonder why he ever expended so much time and effort trying to get elected.

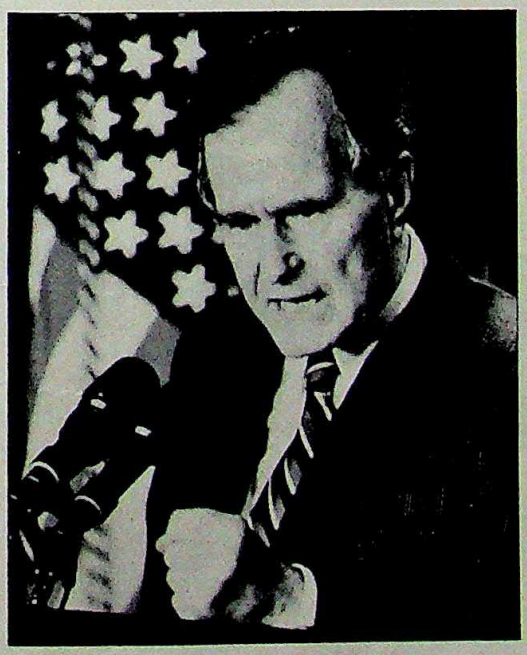
The United States should move to implement a number of measures after the war:

▶ An arms-control policy for the Gulf to prevent a recurrence of the weapons race that contributed to this conflict.

▶ Some kind of agreement on economic and social development under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which embraces the Gulf nations. Other Arab allies of the US could join this effort, designed to defuse the argument that it is a rich-poor conflict.

▶ A process to address the original Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute. Some issues are susceptible to legal determination, such as drilling rights or the location of the boundaries. These could be put to the International Court of Justice, while the remaining issues are handled by the GCC.

▶ An international programme for imposing tough sanctions against terrorism.



George Bush: full backing at home

The US neither wants to dominate the world order nor is it any longer able to do so.

The new international order that will emerge out of this conflict will see many centres of power, both within regions and between them. These power centres reflect different histories and perceptions. In such a world, peace can be maintained in only one of two ways: by domination or by equilibrium. The United States neither wants to dominate, nor is it any longer able to do so. Therefore we need to rely on a balance of power, globally as well as regionally.

This is why, in the final analysis, all of the so-called diplomatic options would have made matters worse. Each would have left Iraq in a militarily dominant position. None addressed the root problem of the Gulf's lack of security, which drew 415,000 Americans into the region in the first place—a deployment that certified the gap in military capability between Iraq and the moderate Arab countries. Any

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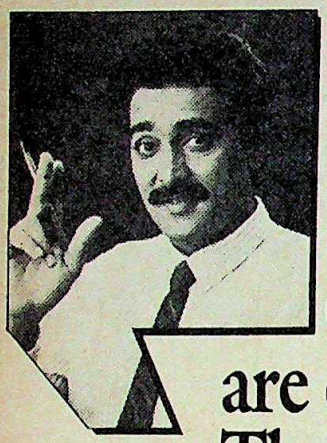

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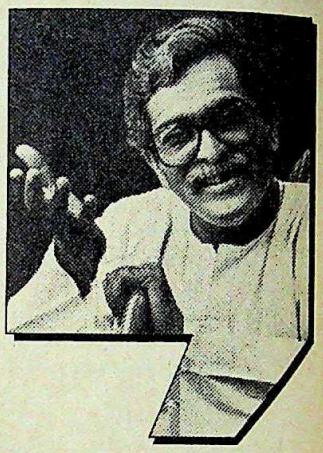

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25	47	44	41	38	35	33
31	88	81	75	69	64	59
44	426	378	338	303	273	247
50	1335	1073	889	753	648	564
55	–	–	–	–	–	1517

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PRASHANT PANJIAR

Deserted street in the Israeli-occupied Gaza strip: fear and loathing

Acceptance of Israel is a psychological challenge. One solution would be to introduce moderate Arab governments as a buffer between Israel and the PLO.

diplomatic solution that did not produce a dramatic reduction of Iraq's military power would have been a victory for Saddam Hussain and his shadow would loom larger.

The practical result of the military operations now in motion will be to bring into balance the military capability of Iraq against its neighbours in the Gulf. Yet ironically, maintaining an equilibrium in the region requires us to navigate between a solution that leaves Iraq too strong and an outcome that would leave Iraq too weak. One of the causes of the present crisis is the one-sided way the Western nations rushed to the defence of Iraq in its war against Iran, forgetting that if Iran was excessively weakened Iraq might become the next aggressor. It would be ironic if another bout of tunnel vision produced an Iraq so weak that its neighbours, especially Iran, seek to refill the vacuum.

Ideally, one military goal should be to pull the teeth of Iraq's offensive capability without destroying its capacity to resist invasion from covetous neighbours. Iraq's capacity to defend itself with conventional weapons against ground attack from other Arabs and Israel would in the long run not be a threat to stability but a contribution to it.

The new balance of power in the region cannot be based on the permanent presence of American ground forces. This was the weakness of diplomatic solutions that would have kept Iraq's military preponderance intact. A major Western ground force in the area would inevitably become the target of radical and nationalist agitation. The cultural gap between even the best-behaved American troops and the local population is unbridgeable. After a brief period, American ground forces would be considered foreign intruders. There would be a repetition of our experiences in Lebanon, including terrorism and sabotage. American ground forces in the area should be withdrawn after victory; residual forces should be stationed beyond the horizon—at sea or perhaps at a few remote air bases. Any monitoring of the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait should be done by Arab members of the coalition.

After some domestic equilibrium is restored, the Kremlin may become more active in the Middle East—especially in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Turkey, which border the Soviet Union. If the Muslim republics remain Soviet, Moscow will be wary of Muslim radicalism lest it inflame its own Muslim population. But if the Muslim republics break off and become independent, Moscow may seek favour in the break-away states by embracing Islamic radicalism—especially if the Muslim world turns more extremist.

FINALLY, and perhaps most importantly, a new balance of power will revive prospects for progress on the Arab-Israeli conflict. A peace process dominated by Saddam Hussain, or heavily influenced by him, would have been a debacle. For it would have taught the lesson that radicalism, terrorism and force are the road to diplomatic progress in the Middle East. This is why President Bush was right in resisting linkage of the Kuwait and Palestinian problems.

Progress on the diplomatic front will depend on proper perceptions. The Arab-Israeli problem is stated as a negotiating issue: how to convene an international meet that returns Israel to the 1967 frontiers, and induces the Arabs to 'accept' Israel.

I am very sceptical about an international conference. For the US would be totally isolated at such a forum. The behaviour of France just prior to the Gulf war is a small foretaste of what would happen. Instead of being a mediator, America would be manoeuvred into the role of Israel's lawyer, while Israel would regard any independent position the US took as a betrayal of its interests. No sensible nation would voluntarily throw itself into such a maelstrom. Since everything depends on our influence with Israel anyway, I would prefer a diplomatic process in which the US, the moderate Arab countries and Israel participate.

For Israel, a return to pre-1967 borders and the creation of a Palestinian state are not negotiating issues. The distance from the Jordan River to the sea is less than 50 miles. The corridor

POST-WAR CONDUCT

- **The American forces should withdraw after victory.**
- **The Arab countries should monitor any Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.**
- **Major diplomatic initiative should be launched to address the thorny Palestinian problem.**

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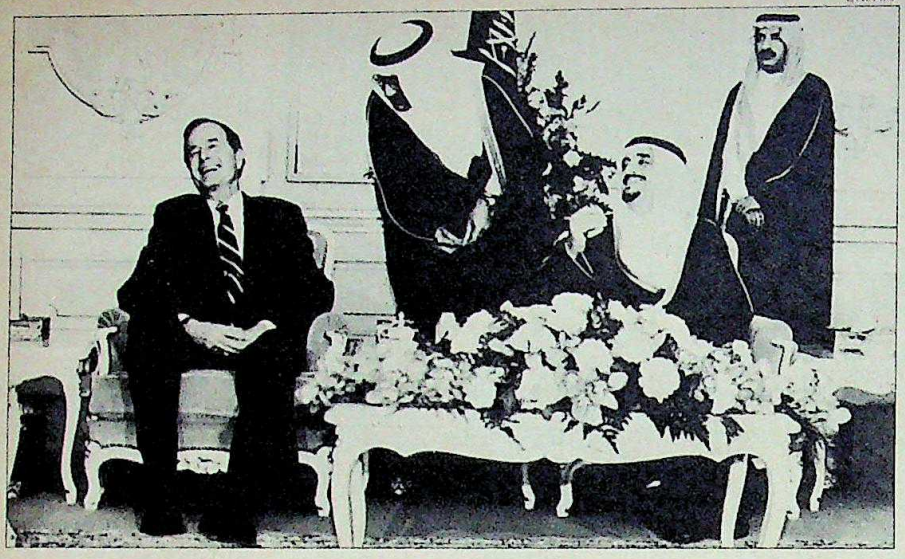
UN/AFP



President Bush with Saudi Arabian King Fahd: strong allies

Ideally, one military goal should be to pull the teeth of Iraq's offensive capability without destroying its capacity to resist invasion from covetous neighbours.

between Tel Aviv and Haifa in terms of the 1967 frontiers is about 10 miles wide. It would be difficult to squeeze two states into such a limited area. Moreover, how could it possibly be compatible with security?

Moreover, a return to pre-1967 borders would still leave almost as many Arabs under Israeli control as live on the West Bank minus Gaza. How is one going to justify that one group of Arabs must live under Israeli rule while other Arabs are entitled to self-determination? Thus a restoration of pre-1967 borders, coupled with a Palestinian state, could turn into the first step to the further reduction of Israel.

Acceptance of Israel is not only a legal but a psychological challenge. And I find it hard to believe that any legal formula can provide for Israeli security. After all, Kuwait lived in a state of legal peace with Iraq till the other day without being able to prevent Iraqi aggression. And Saddam attacked Israel in a war from which Israel had kept totally aloof because it calculated that many Arabs would support Iraq against Israeli retaliation, no matter how justified. American leaders understandably felt this danger real enough to advise against retaliation. But when reaction to an unprovoked attack becomes an international issue, Israel is still certified as a pariah.

An interim solution might seek to introduce the moderate Arab governments, fresh from the victory over Iraq, as a buffer between Israel and the PLO. It might reduce the amount of territory Israel is asked to give up in return for something less than formal peace. A possible approach, mediated by the US, might unfold like this:

► A conference would be assembled, under the aegis of the UN secretary-general, composed of the United States, Israel and the Arab states allied with America in the Gulf crisis.

► The moderate Arab countries would agree to act as trustees for territories that are returned to Arab control for a specified amount of time, say five to 10 years.

► The moderate Arab states would also commit themselves to demilitarising these areas under UN supervision.

► Israel would give up all of Gaza and the most heavily populated areas of the West Bank, retaining only territories essential to its security. It would be allowed to participate in verifying the demilitarisation of any territory it evacuates.

► Precise government arrangements would be established by agreement, but would not for the interim period lead to a separate state. As a practical matter, the trustee powers would undoubtedly establish an administration containing individuals acceptable to the PLO.

As for Israel, it must avoid two possible nightmares. If it insists on holding onto every square inch of occupied territory, it could suffer the fate of South Africa and find itself ostracised, and even face UN sanctions. On the other hand, if it follows the maxims of conventional wisdom and gives up all the occupied territories, it runs the risk of winding up like Lebanon gradually squeezed to the point of obliteration. For its own sake, Israel must find a middle way. And there is no better moment to do that than when its most dangerous enemy has been defeated.

In several thousand years of recorded history, the Middle East has produced more conflicts than any other region. As the source of three great religions, it has always inspired great passions. It is therefore unlikely that any one negotiation can bring permanent tranquillity to this turbulent area. An Arab-Israeli negotiation will not end all the turmoil, because many Middle East problems are quite independent of that conflict. Fundamentalism in Iran has next to nothing to do with the Palestinian issue, though Teheran has exploited it. And Saddam Hussain would have tried to dominate his neighbours even if the Palestinian problem did not exist. But what the Arab-Israeli conflict has done is to make it difficult for the voices of moderation in the Arab world to cooperate with their supporters in the West. Victory in the Gulf will create a historic opportunity to alter that particular equation—and it should be seized.

Los Angeles Times International

AGENDA FOR ISRAEL

- **A conference of the US, its Arab allies and Israel should be convened.**
- **Israel should surrender all of Gaza and populated areas of West Bank.**
- **It should be allowed to verify demilitarisation of areas it vacates.**

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inimitable sty
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given us New
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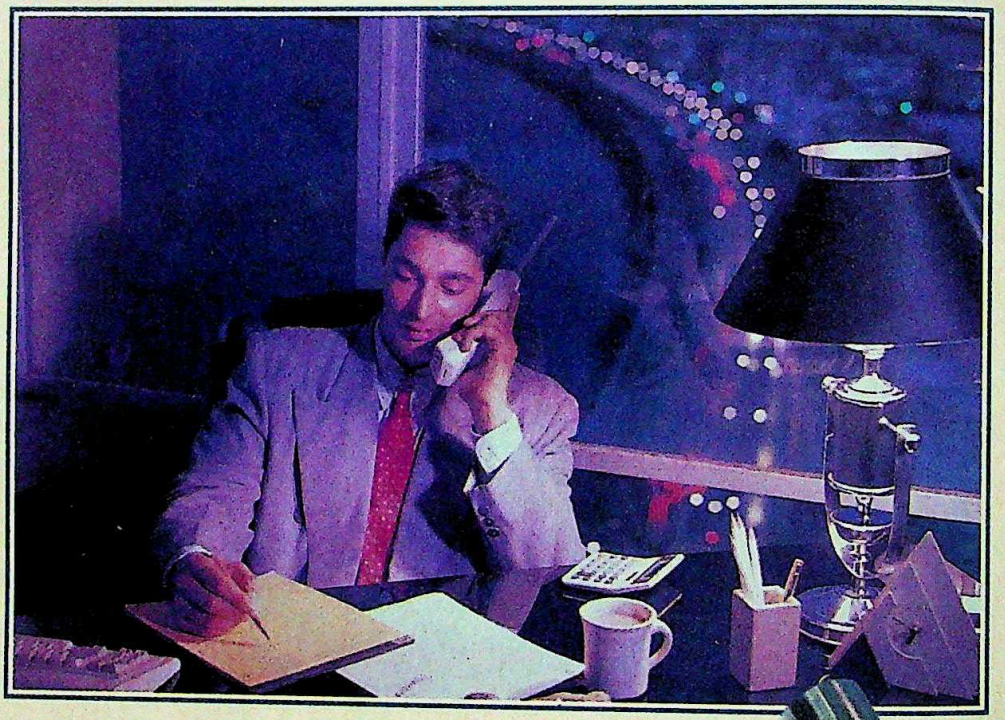

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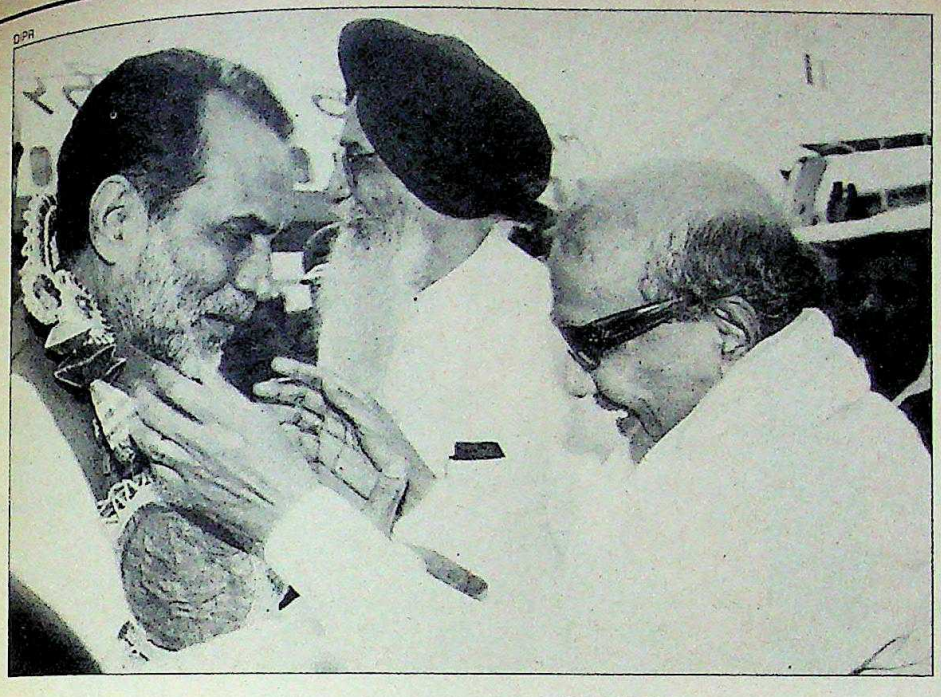

Barnala exonerated the DMK for harbouring LTTE militants. He was against the dismissal of a popular government.

(From left) Chandra Shekhar, Barnala and Karunanidhi: easing tensions

THE DMK

Fighting Back

While the Congress(I) keeps its guns trained on him, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi shows he can hit back and avert the threat of dismissal.

By PRABHU CHAWLA
with ANAND VISWANATHAN

KARUNANIDHI'S cup of sorrow is close to brimming over. He knows that while the pressure from the Centre to dismiss his Government has eased off for the moment, the Congress(I) and its ally the AIADMK are sharpening their knives for the kill.

While Chandra Shekhar's Government may have given him breathing space, it came only after some nasty shocks. To be accused of harbouring one group of militants—the LTTE—was bad enough but to be accused of harbouring two was the height of political misfortune. The prime minister charged the DMK Ministry with allowing the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) to operate from the state. Chandra Shekhar later modified his accusations—some consolation.

Things were also greatly helped by the decisive intervention of Governor Surjit Singh Barnala. His opening address on the budget session eve in the state Assembly emphatically exonerated the Government of the charges levelled against it. Law and order was under control, Barnala told the Assembly, and the Tamil militants had been rounded up. In a veiled warning to the Centre, he advised against the dismissal of a democratically elected government until there was solid evidence to substantiate the charges.

At the Centre as well, Karunanidhi found he had the support of the Janata Dal and all the left parties. Even the BJP, which is hostile to the DMK, told the prime minister to avoid any undemocratic action.

But the Congress(I) is more than making up for the respite at the Centre. Hardly a day goes by without some Congress(I) personality or another trying to tar the DMK over the LTTE and ULFA issues. They disrupted the proceedings of the Assembly in Madras last fortnight with their demand for Karunanidhi's dismissal, leading to the suspension of the AIADMK members for the rest of the session.

Then former Union minister of state for home, P. Chidambaram, claimed he had reliable information on six ULFA centres. Karunanidhi denied it but Chidambaram said he could prove it. This provoked speculation in the DMK camp that the latest Congress(I) outbursts were based on highly partisan reports prepared by the Intelligence Bureau, which after a reshuffle has a new chief, M.K. Narayanan, believed to be close to both Chidambaram and the Congress(I).

In fact, even in 1976, Karunanidhi was dismissed by the Centre on the basis of intelligence reports filed by the Tamil Nadu unit of the bureau—headed by Narayanan at the time. The feeling among DMK leaders is that a strong lobby of Tamil Nadu officials who have been able to return to sensitive posts after the change of government at the Centre are behind the renewed attacks on their government. The other *betes noire* in their analysis are the Commerce Minister Subramanian Swamy and the TNCC(I) chief Vazhapadi Ramamurthy.

The Congress(I)'s campaign against Karunanidhi has involved shoving the AIADMK leader, Jayalalitha, to the forefront. In two meetings with the prime minister in the space of a fort-

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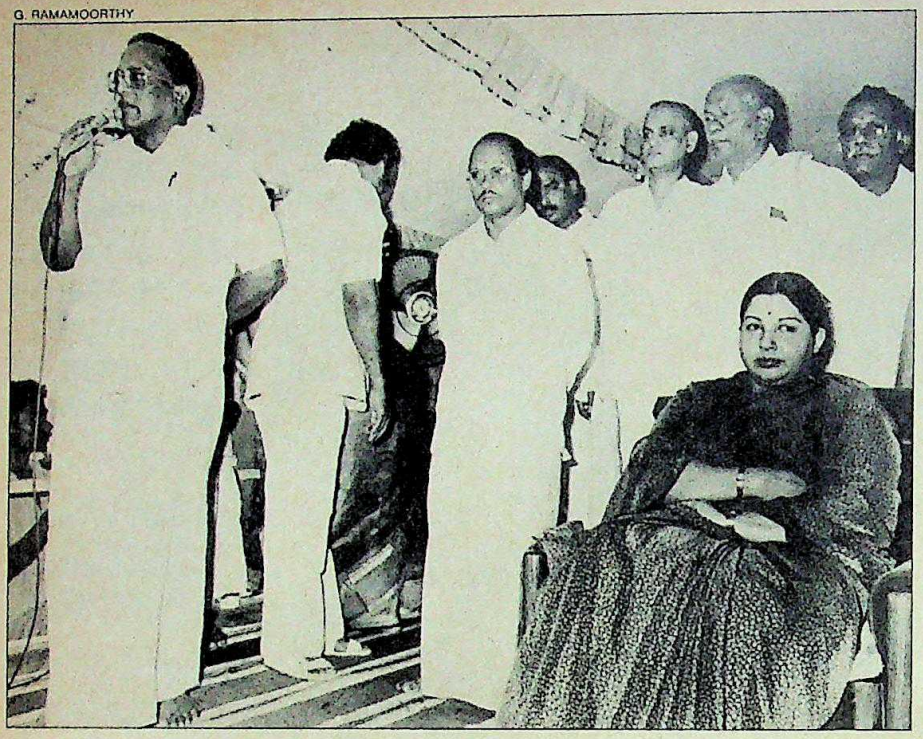
G. RAMAMOORTHY



Congress(I)'s relentless campaign against the Karunanidhi Government has pushed Jayalalitha to the forefront, and she urged the dismissal of the DMK Government.

K. Ramamurthy (left) with Jayalalitha at a protest meeting

night, she urged the dismissal of the Government. The former actress was warmly welcomed by the Congress(I) on her arrival in the capital. Given her legendary capriciousness, they wanted to ensure that she stands her ground when talking to Shekhar about her dismissal demands.

To their disappointment, Shekhar was cautious, in marked contrast to his earlier outbursts in Parliament. He made it clear that he would "think a hundred times" before resorting to extreme action. This was an ideal opportunity for the DMK to launch a blistering counter-attack on the Congress(I) and the AIADMK for their motives.

The DMK released documentary evidence showing the administrative and financial support which the previous AIADMK government had extended to the LTTE. Furthermore, it said the LTTE had indulged in much more violence against the local population during the AIADMK regime than it had ever done in recent times. The law and order situation in Tamil Nadu, the DMK declared, was much better than that in any other state in the country. Tamil Nadu had remained completely untainted by the virus of communal violence in comparison with the bloody goings-on in the Congress(I)-ruled states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

These gibes were all part of an offensive designed to show that the Congress(I) and the AIADMK were throwing mud at the DMK as a way of making the public forget their own dismal performances. Said Mursoli Maran, a DMK member of the Rajya Sahba: "Why are they flogging this dead horse? We will give them a fitting reply because all they ever offered the public was a vegetable government for three years."

THE DMK is on safe ground here. By the end of its first four months in power, it had implemented over 75 per cent of its election promises. Karunanidhi also made a point of continuing the equality policy pursued by MGR. He reserved 30 per cent of government jobs for women; ordered that only women would be recruited as teachers for standards one to three in elementary schools; instituted a Rs 46-crore scheme for improving their economic condition; and finally, granted equal property rights to Hindu women by amending the Hindu Succession Act.

He's also preparing for a possible dismissal by presenting the budget on February 2 instead of, as expected, at the end of the month. This will give him a chance to outline some more populist projects to keep the voters happy.

Nor has Karunanidhi let matters rest by merely vaunting his Government's achievements. The second prong of his strategy centred on driving a wedge within the AIADMK ranks. Last fortnight, the AIADMK suffered a big set-back when it lost its status as the Opposition party following the resignation of K. Madhappan, one of the 26 AIADMK MLAs. This brought the AIADMK tally to one less than that of the Congress(I).

To make matters worse, the Assembly Speaker, Dr Tamizhkudimagan, recognised G.K. Moopanar as the new leader of the Opposition. Moopanar is known to be opposed to Jayalalitha and against any future alliance with the AIADMK. Moreover, Moopanar has never been as vocal against the DMK Government as others within the Congress(I). Karunanidhi's plan, therefore, is to erode the support base which Jayalalitha enjoys within the Congress(I).

He's also far too astute a politician merely to attack his opponents without also trying to pacify them. An administrative reshuffle was ordered. He replaced the chief secretary M.M. Rajendran with T.V. Anthony. The Congress(I) had been demanding that Rajendran—reputed to be one of the most efficient officers in the state—be shifted. The reshuffle also involved appointing A. Rajmohan as the additional director-general of police. Rajmohan was chosen to clip the wings of the Director-General, P. Dorai, who had been accused by the Congress(I) of being soft on the Tigers.

Karunanidhi's other response in the past few weeks has been to renew pressure on LTTE cadres by arresting them and putting them under National Security Act (NSA) detention.

Even this was not enough for his

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enemies, though. Despite picking up over 80 LTTE men and several other Tamil militants on two consecutive days alone last month, the state Congress(I) chief, Vazhapadi Ramamurthy accused Karunanidhi of letting off the "real armed LTTE" and arresting only harmless students. The real militants, it was claimed, were enjoying government hospitality in separate camps.

M.K. NARAYANAN

S. SWAMY

P. CHIDAMBARAM

The DMK believes not only are politicians behind the attacks on their Government but some officials are targeting them too.

But the Tigers themselves continued to press for complete freedom. On January 13 all hell broke loose when they went on the rampage in an escape attempt. In the ensuing battle, one LTTE man was shot dead and several militants and policemen were injured. Karunanidhi subsequently charged 31 of the Tigers under the NSA in a move designed to prove that he was getting tough on them.

He later followed up the arrests with an appeal to the Tigers to understand the difficult situation he was in. Speaking in the Assembly, Karunanidhi reiterated his support for the cause of Tamil Eelam but told them he could not allow any violent activities in the state.

The Centre may have stopped wagging its finger at the Karunanidhi Ministry for the time being but the atmosphere of insecurity and impending doom hasn't been dispelled. The pro-dismissal campaign among the Congress(I) and the AIADMK shows no sign of letting up. A rasta roko agitation was planned and in the first week of February, MPs of both parties intend to present a memorandum demanding—what else?—Karunanidhi's head. What the chief minister must be wondering is: having won one battle, will he now go on to lose the war?

AIADMK

Falling Apart

KARUNANIDHI need not devote his political skills to splitting the AIADMK. Dissident members of that party are managing this task quite well themselves. The split came with the resignation of K. Madhappan. In one fell swoop, the AIADMK lost its status as the main opposition party because the number of its MLAs fell to one below that of the Congress(I).

The crisis deepened when Speaker Tamizhkudimagan ruled that the three members belonging to the AIADMK breakaway group—S. Thirunavukarasu, S.R. Ramachandran and S.D. Ugam Chand—would be recognised as AIADMK(2).

The words were barely out of his mouth before pandemonium broke out in the Assembly. Some AIADMK members assaulted the Speaker. The Speaker suspended the AIADMK for the rest of the session and the next one too.

Jayalalitha declared dramatically that "democracy was dead under Karunanidhi". However she had none other to blame but herself for it was merely a question of time before someone stood up to her notoriously dictatorial style of functioning.

When she expelled 16 members last August, she must have hoped that the dust would settle quickly. Instead, a pitched battle broke out for control of the party headquarters. Members of both factions were arrested. At that time, Jayalalitha put all the blame on Karunanidhi. Even this time Karunanidhi is believed to be luring Moopanar from the Congress(I) and Thirunavukarasu.

C. RAMAMOORTHY

AIADMK party members: internal dissidence

The theory appears plausible, given that last October, Karunanidhi was successful in weaning away MGR loyalist, K. Kalimuthu, who gave the excuse that the atmosphere after MGR's death was "stifling".

Jayalalitha may be a crowd-puller but it's her poor organisational skills that are causing large-scale defections from her party. Even her enemies would acknowledge that Jayalalitha is an undoubted crowd-puller. But she has yet to realise that this is not enough. Says Thirunavukarasu: "The crowds may go to her but the votes will come to us."

This may well be an exaggeration. But people are beginning to ask how Jayalalitha ever hopes to set her house in order when she spends most of her time in her Bangalore or Hyderabad retreats. One person not complain...g, though, is Karunanidhi.

—ANAND VISWANATHAN

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CONGRESS(I)

Rajiv's Revenge

The high command manages to squash regional bosses, but the party continues to flounder directionless and uninspired.

By PRABHU CHAWLA

THE Congress(I) seems to have concluded that if you can't fight your enemies, take on your own men. Unable to attack the Janata Dal(S) governments at the Centre and the states, Rajiv Gandhi has launched a war against the state leaders of his own party. The Congress(I) president has been locking horns with powerful regional satraps like former Uttar Pradesh chief minister N.D. Tiwari, Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar, AICC(I) functionaries like Vithal Gadgil and Jaffer Sharief, and former Union ministers like Vasant Sathe.

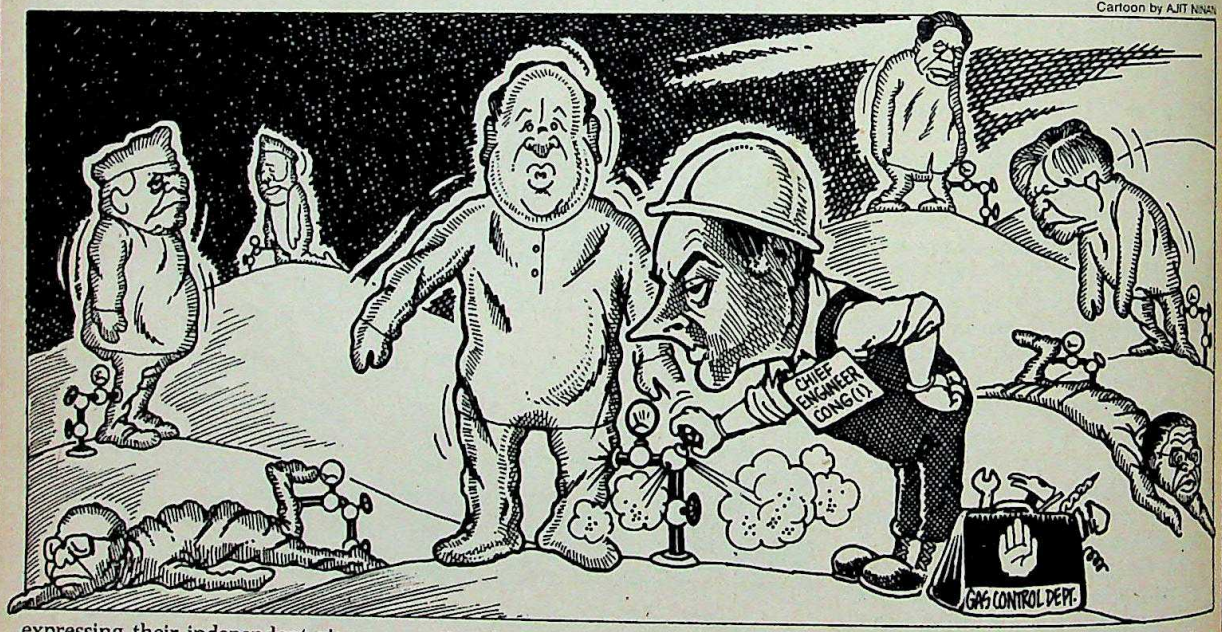
In the Congress(I) lexicon they had committed heresy by expressing their independent views on national issues. By grabbing front page publicity, they had earned the ire of a section of partymen claiming proximity to Rajiv. An aggressive campaign followed in which these leaders were accused of being disloyal. As a PCC(I) chief said: "Rajivji has made it clear that either all of us fall in line or else...."

For the last six months Rajiv has been working at containing all those who had begun to treat diktats from 10, Janpath dismissively. In the process he has demolished the powerful troika of the three Congress(I) chief ministers—Pawar, Veerendra Patil and Chenna Reddy. Reddy and Patil were axed ostensibly for their failure on the law and order front. And Pawar was put under pressure: submit or quit.

In all this Rajiv has been trying to kill two birds with one stone: show the regional satraps their appointed place, and let the Janata Dal(S) leaders know that the decision of supporting their government is his and his alone. He gave a display of this in both Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. When the local leaders were busy attacking chief ministers Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chimanbhai Patel, Rajiv maintained a cryptic silence. Later he snubbed his partymen, including veterans like Tiwari and UPCC(I) chief Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, by ordering them to do exactly what they had been agitating against.

In Maharashtra too a similar strategy was adopted to prove that only Rajiv matters. The dissidents assert that it was only after a clear signal from the high command that senior leaders like Gadgil, S.B. Chavan and A.R. Antulay came out into the open as Pawar's adversaries. But Rajiv then gave a reprieve to Pawar without consulting them. He has similarly deflated Chandra Shekhar supporter Vasant Sathe, and rendered irrelevant the AICC(I) secretariat. None of the four general secretaries are aware of any political action programme and every decision on vital issues is taken by Rajiv.

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



This concentration of power at the top is leading to the inevitable chaos. As a result most Congress(I) MPs absented themselves from the last Parliament session. And those present did not know what their party's stand was on most issues. For example, in the stand-off between Commerce Minister Subramanian Swamy and the Speaker, the Congress(I) was initially for supporting Swamy but later switched to demanding an unconditional apology from him.

More likely than not Rajiv's mixed signals stem from his reluctance to face the elections. The saffron wave is not subsiding; V.P. Singh is still drawing huge crowds; and Rajiv's own organisation is in a shambles. Worse, Chandra Shekhar's popularity is growing. Clearly, if Rajiv is to gain an edge in the run-up to the big stakes, he will have to switch to taking on these political adversaries and leave his party leaders alone.

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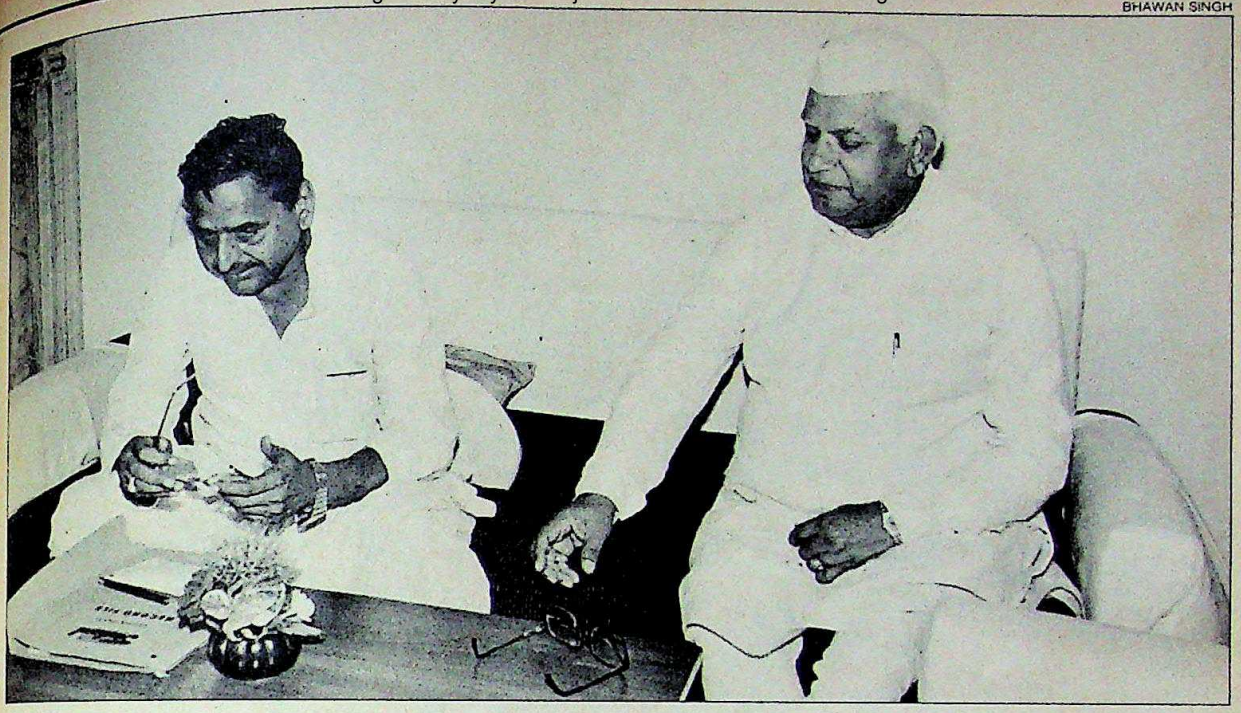
BHAWAN SINGH



Tiwari with Yadav: uneasy truce

UTTAR PRADESH

High Commandeered

Rajiv forces a sullen state unit to back Yadav

By doing the party high command's bidding and giving a fresh lease of life to the belligerent Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, the state Congress(I) has only intensified its dilemma over continuing support to him. It always had a distaste for his politics and only after months of pussy-footing, on January 17 the party's state parliamentary board had resolved to recommend the party's withdrawal of support to Yadav and his downfall looked imminent. But just four days later the Congress(I)'s central leadership decided on a status quo avowedly to avoid destabilising the state at the time of a national and international crisis.

The Congressmen have followed the Delhi directive—but with great reluctance. AICC(I) observer Sitaram Kesari had to come down to pacify the agitated partymen. Still many of the 94 party MLAs visibly hesitated to raise their hands in the Vidhan Sabha in favour of the vote of thanks to the governor's address on January 25. One sullen MLA recited this couplet in the lobby: *Hunter khaa ke salaam kartey hein. Hum wo sher hein jo circus mein kaam kartey hein* (We salute at the crack of a whip/We are tigers but we work for a circus).

To show their contempt, a group of 12 MLAs, under Saraswati Pratap Singh, even gave a memorandum to the legislative party leader, N.D. Tiwari, asking the party to join the Yadav Government. Said one of them: "We should have the courage to say openly whether we are supporting or opposing Yadav. We cannot simply disown his activities when his government is surviving on our support."

The Congress(I) in the state has also lost face because nothing has changed to overrule its resolution, to ditch Yadav, which had said: "We are recommending this because the Yadav Government has not fulfilled most of the conditions we had placed for our support." One of the conditions was two separate probes by sitting high court judges into the Ayodhya killings and the communal riots. Yadav wasn't complying, but a day after Health Minister Rampal Singh quit his post, he announced one probe at a press conference but constituted with retired high court judges.

Another moral dilemma for the party now is: whether Tiwari should

COUNTDOWN THAT WASN'T

INITIAL RUMBLINGS
The Congress(I) on January 5 tells the Speaker that it will function as an opposition party in the Vidhan Sabha. On January 15, Rajiv Gandhi says that his party is reviewing its support to Yadav.

READY TO STRIKE
The state Congress(I) Parliamentary Board on January 17 recommends withdrawal of support to Yadav because he has not fulfilled the party's conditions. N.D. Tiwari and Rajendra Kumari Bajpai take this message to the high command.

YADAV SWINGS INTO ACTION
Yadav sets up probe into the Ayodhya killings and communal riots. Congress(I) leaders not satisfied.

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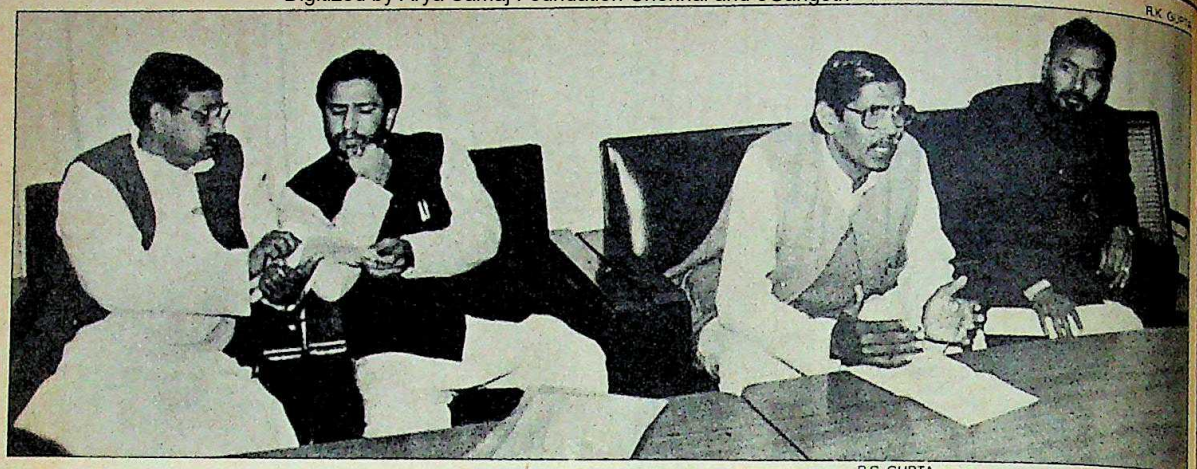
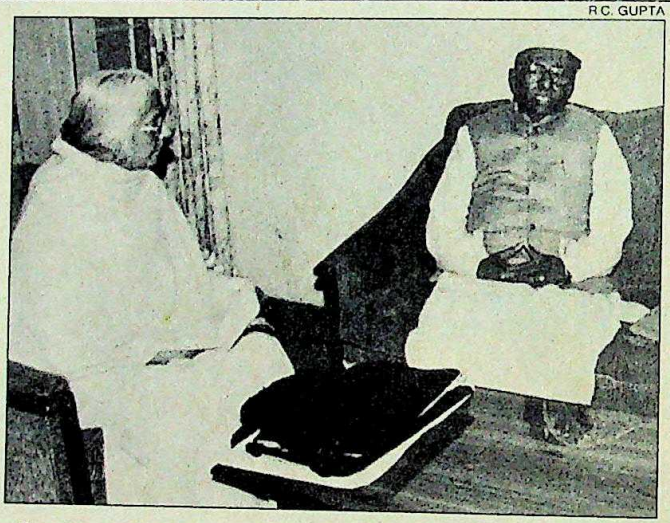


R.K. GUPTA

R.C. GUPTA



Janata Dal(S) dissidents; and (above) Bajpai, Kesari and Tiwari: futile bid

resign from the post of leader of the Opposition in Vidhan Sabha after voting in favour of the Government a second time in three months. Most of the MLAs firmly believed that he would, considering how desperately the Congress(I) had staked its claim, earlier in January, in meetings with the Speaker and how Tiwari had vehemently pleaded with the Congress(I) President Rajiv Gandhi against propping up Yadav. Tiwari himself remained noncommittal. Said he: "We are discussing the issue in the party."

A victorious Yadav is further rubbing salt into the party's wounds with his newly-acquired arrogance towards the Congress(I) MLAs. Those who earlier could meet him easily are now kept waiting outside the chief minister's office. Yadav seems to have stopped bothering about even the top Congress(I) leaders in the state. Says a senior minister close to him: "He knows that these people do not matter till the time the Delhi bosses are on his right side." Another reason for Yadav's confidence is his calculation that the Congress(I) is shying away from polls at this stage and therefore will continue to support him. Rued one nonplussed Congress(I) leader: "Now it is difficult to decide as to who needs support—this government from our party or our party from Yadav."

CONFUSION in the Congress(I) camp over support to Yadav, however, continued till the last minute. On the eve of the Vidhan Sabha session, Tiwari and UPCC(I) chief Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, a consistent critic of Yadav, had gone to Delhi to consult the high command. When the session opened, some Congressmen announced in the House that there was a message from Delhi to boycott the governor's address. Many legislators walked out as the governor reached the podium but a majority of them remained seated in protest against the absence of clear-cut guidelines.

Tiwari returned to Lucknow on January 22. Meanwhile, the Vidhan Sabha was adjourned after Janata Dal members obstructed proceedings. They insisted on a categorical statement by the Congress(I) supporting the Government. In the evening Tiwari told newsmen: "Because our party does not want to create a crisis at this juncture of a serious national and international situation and because withdrawal of support in Uttar Pradesh could have repercussions at the Centre also, we have decided to maintain the status quo." And the status quo means Yadav riding roughshod over his opponents in the state and the Congress(I) remaining a hapless onlooker.

—DILIP AWASTHI

MISLEADING SIGNALS

As the assembly session opens, some Congress(I) leaders relate a message from Delhi to boycott the governor's address; some MLAs do while others don't, protesting against unclear guidelines.

THE VOLTE FACE

Back from Delhi, Tiwari announces: "Our party does not want to create a crisis in the midst of a serious national and international situation, so we have decided to maintain a political status quo."

DOING THE BIDDING, SULLENLY

AICC(I) observer Sitaram Kesari comes to Lucknow to pacify agitated MLAs. The 94-member Congress(I) reluctantly votes in favour of the thanks motion on the governor's address and saves the Yadav Government a second time.

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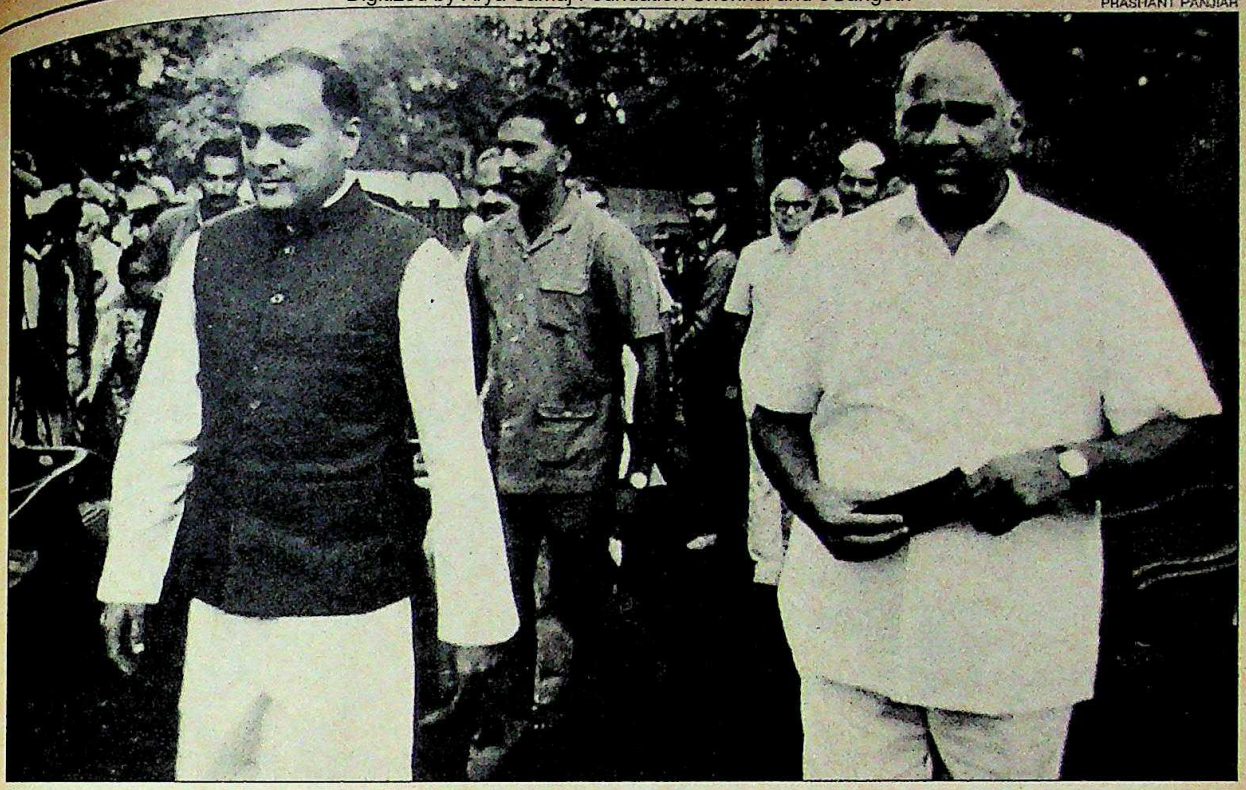
PRASHANT PANJIAR



Rajiv with Pawar: crisis defused

SHARAD PAWAR

Averting the Axe

But the chief minister has been cut down to size

FOR Maratha leaders acutely aware of their place in history, the parallel was obvious. Chief Minister Sharad Pawar proved as difficult to dislodge as the region's hero, Shivaji, who had valiantly withstood attacks by Aurangzeb in the 17th century.

Nobody believed the protestations made on behalf of Rajiv Gandhi that he had absolutely nothing to do with the mutiny in Pawar's Cabinet. None of the four ministers involved would have dared charge Pawar with disloyalty and demand his removal without a nudge from the high command.

When party observers arrived to monitor the crisis, they found that Pawar was a much smarter tactician than the former chief ministers of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh—Veerendra Patil and Chenna Reddy—who were ousted last year. They were regarded as the powerful troika of chief ministers capable of cocking a snook at the party's national leadership.

Pawar should have been the next to fall. But he proved to be more astute. A communal spark in Jogeshwari, a Bombay suburb, was snuffed out before it could engulf the capital. When his own ministers accused him of "disloyalty" he pronounced his willingness to abide by the high command's judgement. He also pooh-poohed talk that, if ousted, he would leave the party.

Pawar was helped by the fact that none of his challengers commanded a substantial base in the legislature party. And his aides soon came to his rescue. Unequivocal statements were made in Pawar's defence. "The rebellion does not have the backing of our leader, Rajiv Gandhi," declared Pawar's confidant and Rajya Sabha MP Suresh Kalmadi. And the Minister of State for Home Arun Mehta maintained that the dissidents barely had the support of 15 legislators.

It soon became apparent that the high command would have a tough time removing Pawar. The prospect of more MLAs plumping for Pawar loomed

ORCHESTRATED DISSIDENCE

INITIAL RUMBLINGS
Finance Minister Ramarao Adik complains that Indira loyalists are getting a raw deal and sets the anti-Sharad Pawar campaign rolling.

THE WARNING SHOT
AICC(I) General Secretary J. Sharief ousted for saying there is no question of replacing Pawar.

OPEN REBELLION
Four senior ministers including Sushil Kumar Shinde, state party chief, demand that Sharad Pawar should quit for his 'disloyalty' in the presence of party spokesman V.N. Gadgil and two former chief ministers S.B. Chavan and A.R. Antulay, confirming the fact that they had the high command's backing.

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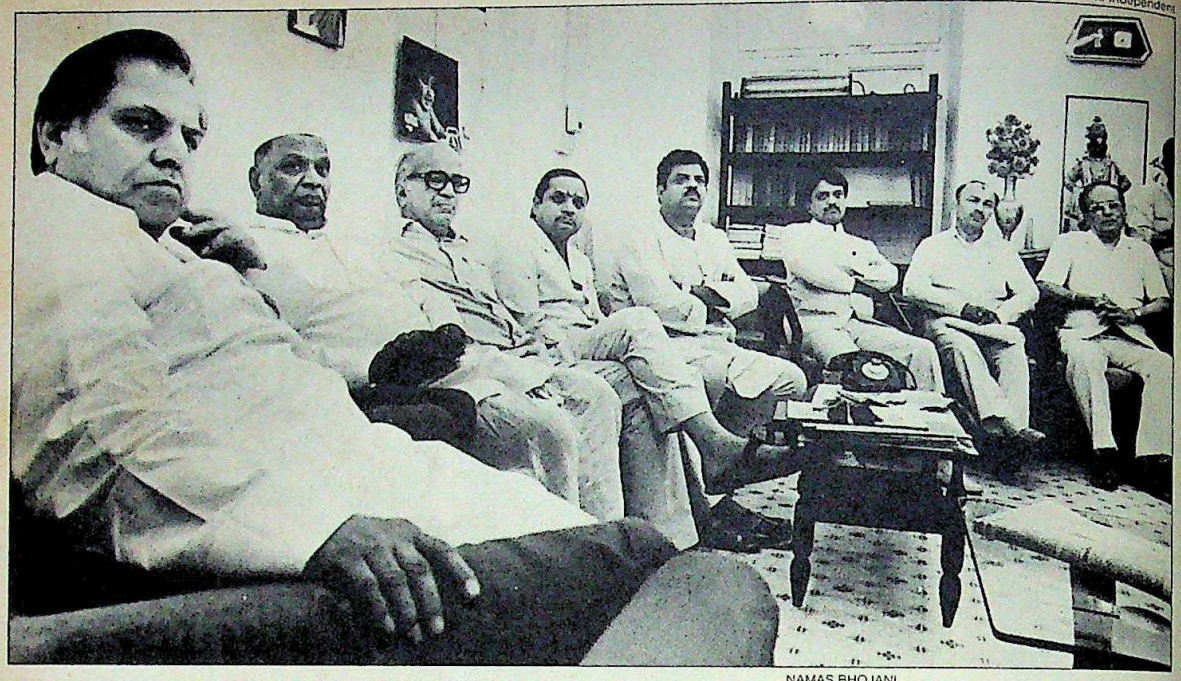
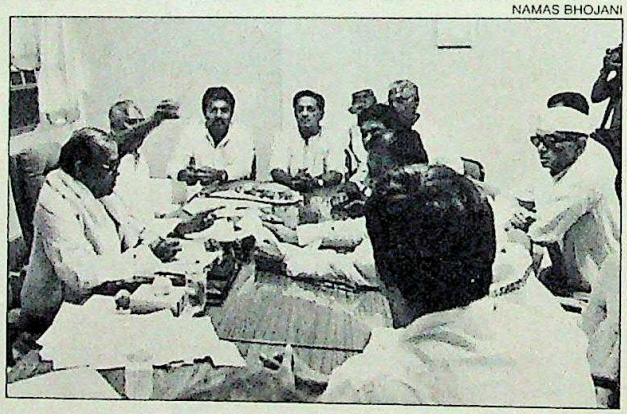


NAMAS BHOJANI



The oust-Pawar gang and (above) AICC(I) observers: failed manoeuvres

dangerously large. The Congress(I) ministry commands a majority only with the support of 10 independents. Eight independents affirmed their support for Pawar: "Pawar's administrative acumen along with his secular and democratic outlook make it incumbent on us to support him," they said.

Pawar's success in maintaining stability and communal peace was achieved through his excellent rapport with opposition leaders and also by establishing himself as the unquestioned leader in his own party. His political authority has further ensured that excesses will not be tolerated.

In the long run, the costs to both Rajiv and the Congress(I) of last fortnight's misadventure may well prove prohibitive. Though Pawar's demand for the sacking of rebel ministers was turned down, he managed to get the green signal for the long-awaited cabinet expansion. He's added four cabinet ministers and seven ministers of state. What is significant is that not one of them is even capable of creating problems for Pawar—which shows that he is likely to emerge stronger from this crisis.

As the stunned rebel ministers were forced to beat a retreat, it became apparent that the fallout would continue for months to come. The rebels had not only lost face within the party, but their faith in the high command was also badly shaken. If Pawar handles the situation shrewdly in the following months, he can ensure that no challenge will ever get beyond the tentative statement-drafting stage.

Maharashtra was regarded as the Congress(I)'s only citadel outside the southern belt. By its ill-planned manoeuvre, the high command has succeeded in shaking the fortress to its foundations, without being able to reinforce its own authority. There may be no clear victor this time, but when the battle is resumed, there is little doubt that only one side will emerge triumphant.

—M. RAHMAN

PAWAR'S COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

Pawar gives a memorandum to the AICC(I) observers signed by 120 MLAs backing him. He later gets a midnight audience in Delhi with Rajiv who agrees to retain him as chief minister.

REBELS HURT

Sharad Pawar insists on rebels publicly repenting even as news of Sharad Pawar handing over his resignation flashes. Rebels feel they are being let down.

CRISIS DEFUSED

After a second pow-wow at 10, Janpath, Pawar's 'resignation' is rejected. Shinde is replaced as MPCC(I) chief by former chief minister Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar. Pawar has finally outwitted the rebels.

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CHIMANBHAI PATEL

Survival Specialist

Chaos reigns as the Gujarat chief minister clings on to power by winning over legislators using dubious tactics

By UDAY MAHURKAR

EVER heard of a leader of a legislature party crossing over to the treasury benches? Perhaps not. But that can happen when Chimanbhai Patel is the chief minister of a state where a farce is being enacted in the name of parliamentary democracy. Last fortnight people in the state were rubbing their eyes in disbelief as Ramsinh Parmar, leader of the V.P. Singh faction of the Janata Dal was sworn in as minister of the rebel Janata Dal Ministry along with three others of his group.

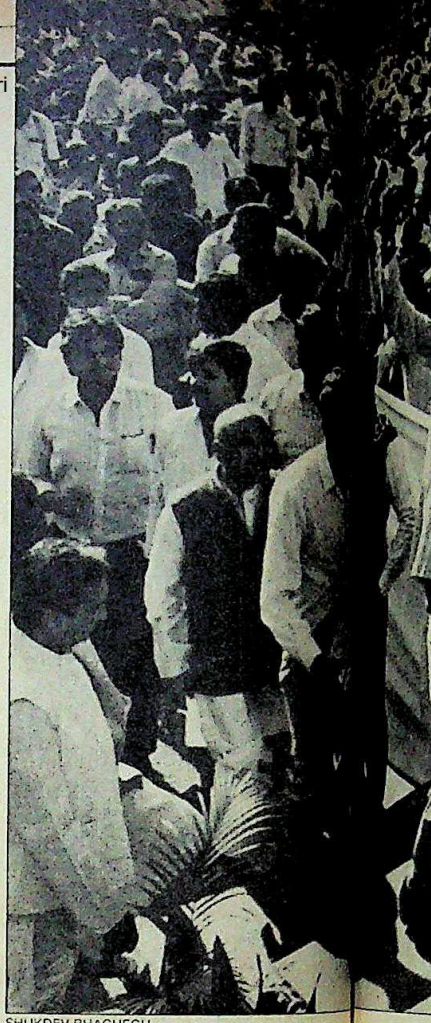
Parmar joining the Chimanbhai Ministry formed of Janata Dal rebels with the support of the Congress(I) seemed shocking especially because he was made leader of the V.P. Singh faction only 10 days before he switched allegiance. But with Chimanbhai on a mission of buying support for his tottering government anything can happen. For Parmar who is now minister of labour, employment and transport still claims he is in the same party as before."V.P. Singh is still my leader at the national level. However in Gujarat, my leader is Chimanbhai."

Splitting parties, buying up MLAs, making ministers out of defectors, throwing political morality to the winds have been the hall-mark of Chimanbhai's 10-month long turbulent tenure as chief minister.

Events over the last month during which time he inspired and presided over unprecedented floor crossing showed to what extent he would go to remain in power. When the Acting Speaker Manubhai Pawar called the V.P. Singh faction of the Janata Dal in response to its request to accord them the status of a separate group in the Assembly, only four MLAs turned up. The group had earlier submitted a list of 18 MLAs who were supposedly backing them. It is not that the rest of the 14 MLAs had fallen ill. Chimanbhai had bought them over. Prominent among them is the leader of the Singh faction Ramsinh Parmar. The modus operandi: inducting four members of the faction into the ministry on January 4 even as Governor Swarup Singh had fixed January 7 as the date for verifying claims of the Singh faction. Said Chimanbhai: "You will see that by the time the Assembly begins on February 11, the V.P. Singh group won't have more than three MLAs."

The chief minister has enough reason to sound arrogant considering how easily the MLAs of the V.P. Singh faction have been accepting the lollipops he has been offering. Apart from promising ministerships, he lured the whip of the group, Nathubhai Kalavadia with the chairmanship of a corporation. Natubhai Dabhi another leader was made the chairman of the Gujarat Backward Class Development Corporation. Incidentally Dabhi had alleged in November last year that he had been offered a huge amount by the Chimanbhai faction to woo him.

Legislators like Dabhi have of course made Chimanbhai's attempt to cling on leech-like to his seat, amazingly easy. When Chimanbhai became chief minister as head of the BJP-Janata Dal combination in early 1990, the Janata Dal had 70 seats and the BJP 67 in the 182-seat Assembly. When the BJP withdrew support in October last year, the Congress(I) with 32 MLAs propped him up. And in December after the Janata Dal split, the V.P. Singh faction first claimed the support of 23 MLAs. If today the faction has only four MLAs with them it is because they hadn't reckoned with the wiles of the chief minister and his ability to bait legislators with the perseverance and patience of a seasoned angler. "This is politics, nothing is impossible," he said after his latest catch. Says Jaspal Singh who is with the V.P. Singh faction: "He is a national evil



SHUKDEV BHACHECH

CHIMANBHAI PATEL

"My ministry is stable"

Chief Minister Chimanbhai Pa spoke to Senior Correspondent U MAHURKAR. Excerpts:

Q. *Even after the split, why has your group called itself Janata Dal*

A. The constitution of the Jana Dal at the national level and in Gu rat is different. Any development o side the state legislature party has bearing on it. It is for the legislatu party to decide whether to change name or not. And it has chosen not

Q. *Are you indulging in hors trading of MLAs?*

A. No. Due to some misunde standing, a few MLAs got mislead joined my rivals. But they have s returned to my fold. My cabi strength is now 21, which is

within th emulate I

Q. Wi quent vis time left

A. I do go in con problems Centre. O to take qu of files pil files are p

Q. Des and order administr

A. The The proble social tens these tens we have a are recrui giving the garding th made som ever, my absence o

Q. The Gujarat is

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Chimanbhai Patel arrives at a meeting: shrewd manipulator

within the limit. Still, I don't plan to emulate Laloo Prasad Yadav.

Q. *With your politicking and frequent visits to Delhi, there is little time left for governance.*

A. I don't go to Delhi on a picnic. I go in connection with solving specific problems of the state pending with the Centre. Once that is done, I come back to take quick decisions. So the charge of files piling up is baseless; only 40 files are pending with me.

Q. *Despite the breakdown of law and order you have refused to make administrative changes at the top.*

A. The situation is under control. The problems are there due to in-built social tensions and will remain unless these tensions are removed. Besides, we have a small police force. Now we are recruiting more policemen and giving them anti-riot training. Regarding the administrative changes, I made some when I took over. However, my options are limited in the absence of good officers.

Q. *The price of groundnut oil in Gujarat is at an all-time high. But you have failed to convince the Centre to import palmolein oil.*

A. The Centre has its own foreign exchange problems preventing it from importing palmolein. However, it has now relented to start imports and palmolein will soon be in the market.

Q. *You seem to have forgotten your poll promises.*

A. That isn't true. Many of the problems were pending for several years but I have solved them. I have got the crude oil royalty to Gujarat raised from Rs 192 to Rs 374 per metric tonne. I have got the state's plan allocation substantially raised and also succeeded in getting the Centre's permission for Narmada bonds through which we will raise funds for the Sardar Sarovar project. Moreover, for the first time in the state's history I have mooted concrete tourism and industrial policies.

Q. *Some sections of the Congress(I) are openly critical of you.*

A. I won't comment on that. All I can say is that my government is stable.

who has to be removed before he succeeds in corrupting all. We have no regrets for our earlier attempt to topple Chimanbhai with BJP's help."

CHIMANBHAI'S manipulations do not end there. In December the Government issued an ordinance through which the acting speaker, Manubhai Parmar of Congress(I) was accorded the status of a minister of state which gives him the perk of a car and a bungalow. Later when the V.P. Singh faction wrote to him for recognition he threatened them with invoking clauses of the Anti-Defection Act, glossing over the fact that it is Chimanbhai and his group which has been expelled by the Janata Dal, and they have not joined the Janata Dal(S).

Political cartwheeling and behind the scene manipulations have been Chimanbhai's forte. He first became chief minister in 1973-74 by toppling his party colleague Ghanshyam Oza using the support of MLAs who he won over. Even after the Nav Nirman agitation, which was sparked off by the groundnut

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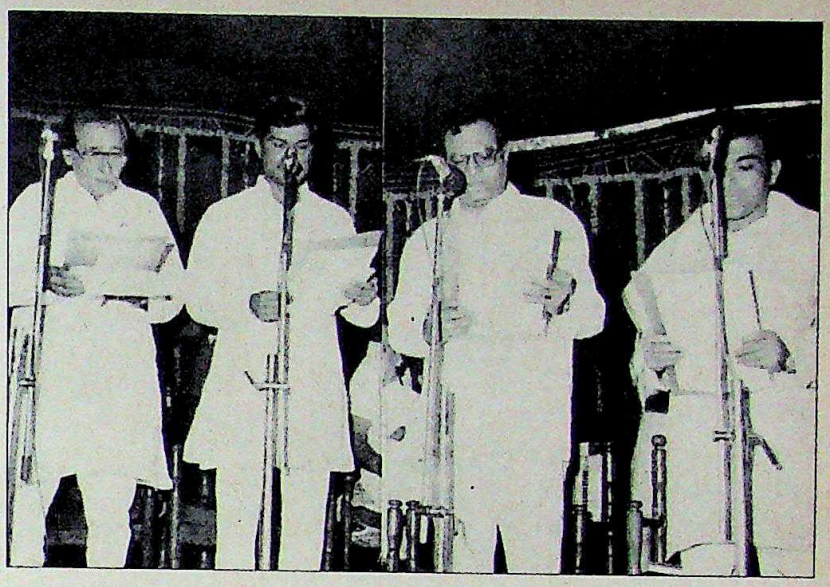
oil crisis and resulted in the death of over 100 students, he refused to quit as chief minister and the Assembly had to be dissolved. He launched a regional party Kisan Mazdoor Lok Paksh soon after and then joined the Janata Party after the Emergency.

His second tenure as chief minister has been no better and if the agitation being launched by the Youth Congress and the BJP to protest against the rapidly rising price of groundnut oil *(see box)* becomes popular, it could well turn out to be another replay of the Nav Nirman agitation days.

As Chimanbhai flutters around feathering his not-too-cosy nest there is much resentment in the Congress(I) especially about the murky goings-on. A resolution passed by the state Youth Congress(I) last fortnight sought immediate withdrawal of support to the Chimanbhai Government. But even in the Congress(I) Amarsinh Chowdhury is a Chimanbhai backer while those like Madhavsinh Solanki are determinedly lobbying for the chief minister's ouster.

With this resolution, Chimanbhai's plans to keep a door open for possible entry into the Congress(I) seems to have been scuttled. And even within his group there is opposition to his attempt to name his party the Janata Dal(S) as those like Roads and Building Minister Dinesh Patel fear that his plan is to take the whole group with him to the Congress(I). For Chimanbhai who technically does not belong to any party such things don't really matter. After all he is a chief minister, isn't he?



Janata Dal defectors being sworn in on January 4: easy prey

Chimanbhai Patel has had no qualms in offering ministerships and perks to those who cross the floor.

ADMINISTRATION

In Limbo

WITH a chief minister who has had little time to attend to affairs of state it is no wonder that the administration is in a shambles. The Naya Gujarat that Chimanbhai Patel promised before the elections now looks a bad dream.

In one of the worst communal riots that erupted in the state due to the VHP-led Ramjanmabhoomi agitation, 200 people were killed since last April. This is the worst casualty figure in the history of the state not counting 1969 and 1985. As violence spread to hitherto communally peaceful areas, curfew had to be clamped in as many as 14 towns. And even women became the target of communal fury.

Chimanbhai conveniently blames the BJP for the riots. "People associated with my former coalition partners are instigating it," he said. On October 30 last year when the Ayodhya issue reached breaking point, Chimanbhai was busy trying to win over Congress(I) support for his tottering government. Said state Congress(I) chief Natwarlal Shah: "Any other chief minister would have resigned in such a situation."

Queue for groundnut oil

With the price of groundnut oil reaching a mind-boggling Rs 42 a kg, serpentine queues for Amul's Dhara, which sells for Rs 32, have become a daily affair in Gujarat towns. Says a Vadodara-based Dhara dealer: "The pressure to get Dhara may cause a law-and-order problem at my shop." The reasons given are drastic shortfall in groundnut production coupled with the massive cut in the import of palmolein oil. "Officials of the state civil supplies are turning a blind eye to the hoarding and black marketing for obvious reason," says a top trader. According to Civil Supplies Minister Thakorebhai Naik who helplessly appealed to the people to consume less groundnut oil, the Centre will import 15,000 tonnes of palmolein to ease the situation.

—UDAY MAHURKAR

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SHARAD SAXENA

An anti-Disneyland rally

DISNEYLAND

Rough Ride

Tenders floated amid protests

WHEN Om Prakash Chautala made up his mind about a *desi* Disneyland he was going to see it through, come hell or high water. And last fortnight, after hanging fire for a year, his dream project seemed as close to reality as possible as global tenders for the amusement park were floated, with April 30 as the deadline.

The Haryana Government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure that the fun park comes up at Damdama in Gurgaon, 45 km from Delhi. Chautala even got the 'dummy' Chief Minister Hukum Singh to speed up the file in Chandigarh with unprecedented haste. And he even got the state Government to refer the file to the Union Tourism Ministry, headed by Devi Lal.

However, the drive into fun city has been no roller-coaster ride. Although 3,990 of the 28,000 notified acres have finally been acquired under Section 6 of the Land Acquisition Act, the project has been the target of much criticism from day one. What Chautala likes to describe as a "simple development project", is perceived by others as a needless luxury. Most agitated are the farmers whose land will be acquired. Says senior Congress(I) leader Rajesh Pilot, who is leading the farmers' protest: "It is an absolutely ridiculous project. Chautala wants to spend Rs 1,000 crore on amusement when people don't even have bread."

But tourism officials in Chandigarh are confident of getting a positive response from collaborators. Said an official: "Even if collaborators are not enthusiastic, the NRIs will definitely come forward. Chautala is personally in touch with them." And the farmers are determined to go all lengths to fight their case. Says Gurgaon-based advocate D.P. Khatana, who is representing the farmers: "We will contest the acquisition. The state can acquire land but only for public utility services like hospitals, not amusement parks." Khatana now plans to file a writ in the Supreme Court as "the high court may be influenced".

For the farmers, who filed petitions in the Land Acquisition Collector's office a year ago when the notification was first issued, the battle will be an arduous one. Though the cultivable land acquired is only 210 acres as against the notified 14,000 acres, the farmers feel that this is only a ploy to weaken their agitation. They claim that at least 1,000 acres of the land which the Tourism Department says is rocky terrain is, in fact, cultivable.

Complains Captain Dhanpal Singh, a resident of Damdama: "We are being harassed by a notification and poor farmers are forced to register their land in the name of Chautala's friends and family." All the farmers affected believe they are being victimised for their political leanings: they are all Gujjars, the traditional votebank of the Congress(I). Not surprisingly, not a single Jat falls under the purview of the acquisition notice.

According to Pilot though, it is more economics than politics that lies behind Chautala's move. He is demanding a judicial probe into the purchase of 1,000 acres of land by Chautala (allegedly registered under various friends' names) in the area near Damdama. He feels that Chautala's ultimate plan is to sell off the land around Disneyland to colonisers, as the market price is bound to rise once the project takes off.

Meanwhile, the state Government has been assuring the farmers that they will be adequately compensated. But they aren't falling for it as the compensation will be far below the market rates. And they have the backing of Bhajan Lal who is demanding a CBI inquiry into the land purchase deal.

For the moment though Chautala seems to be on a roll. Unless he is stopped dead in his tracks by a Supreme Court stay order.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

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PUNJAB

Dashed Hopes

Mann card comes a cropper

FOR Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, as for his predecessor V.P. Singh, a negotiated settlement to the Punjab imbroglio is proving to be a distant mirage. His initiative to hold parleys with Akali leader Simranjit Singh Mann failed to yield results, mainly because of the slippery ground on which both sides are poised politically.

Chandra Shekhar has since faced strident criticism from various quarters including political parties for his reported offer to amend the Constitution. During his recent visit to Chandigarh, he renewed his offer of talks to the militants, but reiterated that security forces will not relent in their operations. On the other hand, though Mann may have achieved the merger of the three principal Akali factions (Badal, Longowal and Mann), he did not have a clear go-ahead from the militants who have started distancing themselves from him for his ambivalent 'self-determination' stand. And to the rest of the nation, Mann is a red rag due to his highly extremist viewpoint.

Mann addressing a joint Akali rally

This puts the Centre on the much-trodden cul-de-sac: trying to contain terrorism and to create an atmosphere congenial for holding elections to the state Assembly. The militants on the other hand have renewed their efforts to see that their writ runs in Punjab.

The Centre has pumped in more paramilitary forces in the state and asked the army to fan out in more areas to restore people's confidence. The Governor, General O.P. Malhotra (Retd), followed up his tour of the trouble-prone areas by deciding to preside over the Republic Day function at Tarn Taran, a hot spot.

The militant bodies, particularly the Panthic Committee (Dr Sohan Singh) have beefed up their ideological onslaught. The militants' declaration of three cities including Amritsar as holy cities could mean closure of trades like tobacco, liquor and even poultry. The intimidation of the populace is evident from the numerous people seeking forgiveness for acts of omission and commission through the columns of the Punjabi language newspapers. Many liquor contractors have promised not to bid in the next auction which means that the annual Rs 350-crore revenue for the state will dry up.

After a decline in killings in December last, the militants have again started hitting at soft targets—like the one in Gill village of Ludhiana district where 12 persons were mowed down. They also mounted pressure in Chandigarh city *(see box)*. That militants have succeeded in neutralising one institution after another is clear from the release in Amritsar recently of the 40 accused in Operation Black Thunder for want of "sufficient evidence".

Thus the complications for resolving the problem within the ambit of the Constitution have increased, but the Akali unity is significant. The Gulf war will keep Punjab, like Kashmir, away from the spotlight for some time to come. But unless the interregnum is utilised to hammer out a workable solution, the problem could loom larger than ever before.

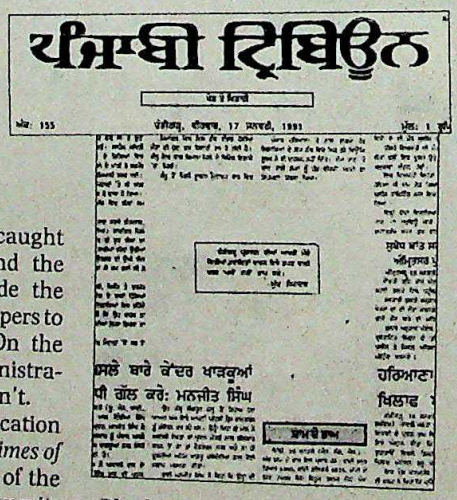
—KANWAR SANDHU

THE PRESS

Tight Squeeze

THE press in Punjab is caught between the devil and the deep sea. On one side the militants are forcing newspapers to publish their statements. On the other the beleaguered administration is making sure they don't.

The most recent provocation was the appearance in *The Times of India* and Punjabi daily *Ajit* of the statement of the Panthic Committee (Dr Sohan Singh) to enforce Punjabi language in Chandigarh by February 1. To stall its publication in *The Tribune* and *Indian Express*, the Chandigarh Administration issued a notification stating that copies of newspapers publishing objectionable material will be seized. It also registered cases under the IPC and the Terrorist Act against the *The Times of India* and *Ajit*.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Blank space in *Punjabi Tribune*

Many mediamen felt it was an infringement of their freedom (one paper left a column blank in protest), while some thought the notification will save them from militants' pressures. The truth is the press has come under attack from all sides.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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"Thank God for someone like her".

She loves me for my hardworking ways.
She also fights because of them.
She likes my getting ahead in life and the presents I get her.
She dislikes the demands made upon me and my time.
It's not that she doesn't understand, but I guess it gets too much for her. (And there's little I can do about it).
She gives me tips to stay healthy and look good. She also hates the looks others give me.
She even sees to it that I don't suffer from the problems normally associated with someone like me.
High-cholesterol, hyperacidity, gas and indigestion.
You know it's because of those two Garlic Pearls she gives me everyday.
I often wonder what I'd do without her.
And whenever someone compares me with friends my age, I silently thank God for a wife like her.
But she always says.
"Thanks to Garlic Pearls"

RANBAXY'S
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PEARLS

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"And Darkness Was Upon The Face Of The Deep... And God Said, Let There Be Light

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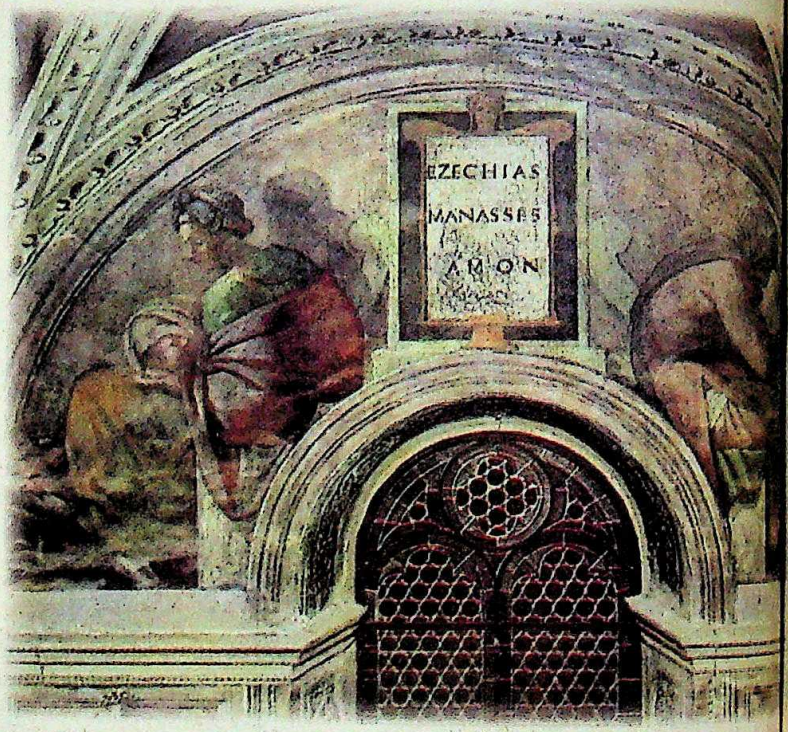
Michelangelo began the task of painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in 1508.

Unveiled in 1512, "all Rome admired it and crowded to see it", as a chronicler described the event. It was, is, indeed one of the greatest masterpieces of world civilization.

Yet, four-and-a-half centuries of time was destined to take its toll. Varnishes made of animal glue, leaking roofs, sooty grease from burning candle tallow collectively obscured the bril-



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liance of the masterpiece. The final injustice of it all was pollution – the dirt and grime of Rome that gradually threatened to inflict its dreaded hand on this 132 x 44 square foot canvas.

THE RESTORATION.

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In bringing the 'Restoration of Michelangelo' to our readers' attention, Hero Honda has a simple message : Let there be light.

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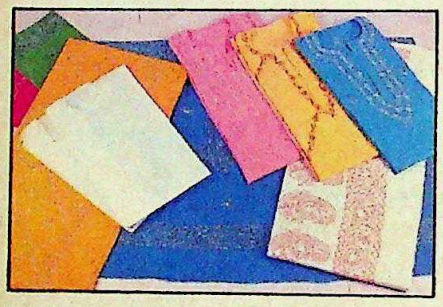

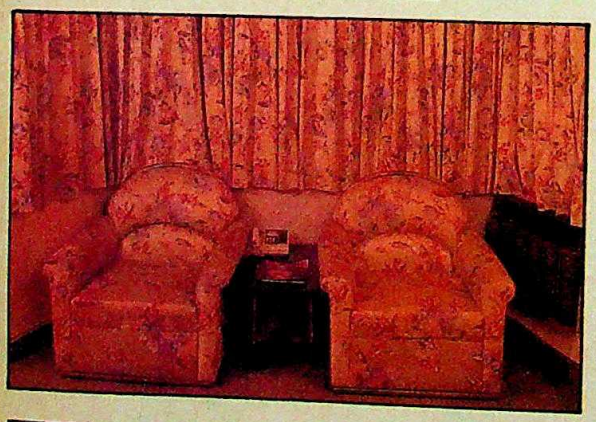

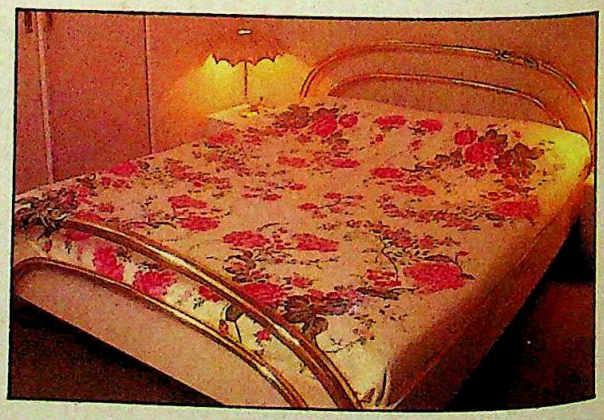

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BIHAR

Locking Horns

Yadav takes on the Centre

THE incipient war between Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav and the Centre has turned into a full-scale offensive. Some of the Union ministers from Bihar have been swooping down on the state. Their prey: Yadav. They have taken him to task for his various acts of omission and commission and demanded his dismissal. Yadav has hit back by raising the 'Centre's neglect' bogey and thundered: "We don't want a confrontation with the Centre but at the same time we will not allow anyone to bully us."

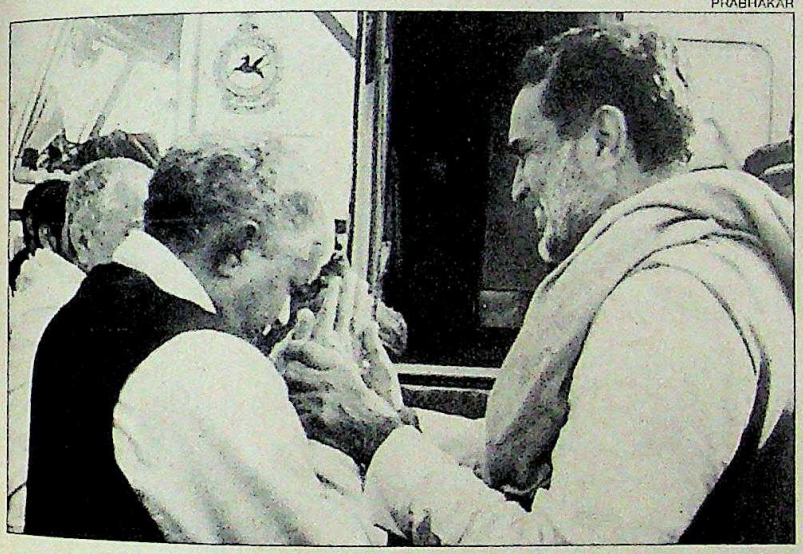
Clearly, a power struggle is on to control politically the country's second-most important state, after Uttar Pradesh. Yadav's supporters allege that Bihar, a stronghold of V.P. Singh, has been a thorn in the flesh of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar because the Janata Dal(S) has not been able to cut much ice here—only about 10 legislators deserted Yadav after the split in the Janata Dal.

Though Chandra Shekhar himself has been gunning for Yadav, he has apparently given the hatchet job to his cabinet colleagues. They have indicted Yadav for: the deepening financial crisis, the deteriorating law and order situation and the caste hysteria generated by him over the Mandal report. The recent murder of Dhanbad Police Superintendent Randhir Verma gave Usha Sinha, minister of state for tourism, an excuse to demand Yadav's removal. Dasai Chaudhury, deputy minister of health and family welfare, went a step further, declaring: "This government will go within a month. I have come for this purpose."

Union Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, who had served as a bureaucrat in Bihar, also pulled up Yadav for creating a financial mess in the state and also for not approaching him for Central assistance.

Yadav chose to ignore other Central ministers, as they were all "political non-entities", but joined issue with Sinha. There has never been the tradition of a chief minister meeting the Union finance minister to plead the case of his state, he asserted and added that he did submit a memorandum to the Finance Ministry.

PRABHAKAR



Yadav with Shekhar: collision path

The wily chief minister pulled out another weapon and started running down the Centre by crying hoarse the "stepmotherly treatment" to the most-backward but resources-rich state.

His offensive bore fruit when last fortnight, despite the state Government's failure to meet the last year's plan outlay, the Planning Commission raised the next year's outlay by 25 per cent. Emboldened, Yadav further took up the cess issue on minerals royalty and threatened that the people might stop movement of coal and iron ore from the state.

The Bihar-Centre hostilities are bound to hot up further but Laloo Prasad Yadav will prove as difficult to dislodge as the other two hot targets: Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chimanbhai Patel.

—FARZAND AHMED

HARYANA

Terror Tactics

Sirsa press intimidated

FREEDOM of the press is reduced from a democratic right to a battle of survival in Sirsa, the home town of the Devi Lal clan. Pressmen face rough times. A journalist was handcuffed and paraded through the streets; another has been slapped with a case of arson. And it is toward the Janata Dal(S) General Secretary Om Prakash Chautala that the finger of suspicion is being pointed.

Pushed to the wall, the town's journalists sought Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's intervention to put an end to the "reign of terror". A team of the Delhi Union of Journalists after a visit to the town wrote to the prime minister, and asked for a probe into police high-handedness.

The journalists say that Chautala is at them because of their candid coverage of the Meham and Darba Kalan by-elections contested by him. "We are not cooking up stories, only reporting facts," says Ved Mahavir Prasad of the *Navbharat Times*, who was booked under the Terrorists Act, and kept in custody for 21 days. Prasad alleges that third-degree methods were used to torture him.

Sirsa has been a hot spot because of the many scandals connected with Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal's family. First was the mysterious death of Chautala's daughter-in-law. And then Jagdish, Devi Lal's son, was charged with raping a village woman. And ever since, Devi Lal and Chautala have not taken kindly to probings by the press.

Journalists also came under renewed attack after the Mandal agitation. "We were sympathetic to the students' cause and this was used as a handle to slap cases on us," says Prasad. Surinder Bhatia of the *Dainik Tribune* has been charged with instigating violence and setting public property on fire in an incident in the town on September 24, 1990. Bhatia, however, was 300 km away on the day. Similarly, Inder Mohan Sharma, a *Jansatta* reporter, has been chargesheeted. Says he: "I was on the spot, reporting the event and the police used the opportunity to shower lathi blows on me."

Deputy Commissioner of Police Raj

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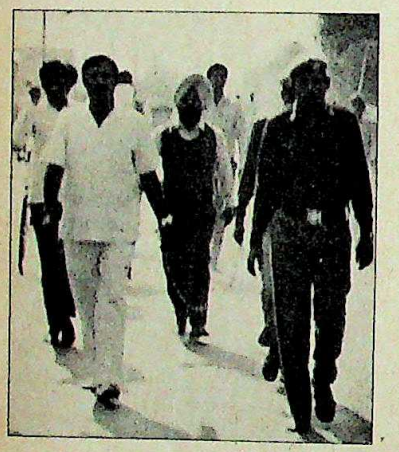
Kumar Verma, however, contends that cases registered against the journalists are true. "They were not just covering the violence but instigating it. We have received complaints from senior citizens that they extorted money from them during the Mandal agitation." But all those contacted by INDIA TODAY said that students, and not journalists, came to them for money, and that they contributed willingly.

"In Punjab, the media is being threatened by the Panthic Committee and here Chautala is harassing us," says Sanjay Arora, a *Punjab Kesari* reporter. A particular instance of police high-handedness is that of Bhatia, who was handcuffed and made to walk three kilometres to the court in Sirsa.

The police as a matter of fact picked up Bhatia a year-and-a-half after a court order of August 1989 when he was pronounced an offender for not personally appearing in the hearings.



Bhatia handcuffed: high-handedness

Chautala insists forcefully that scribes in Sirsa are only blackmailers. "I fully endorse the steps the district police are taking," he told INDIA TODAY. Interestingly Devi Lal in 1988 described the town's mediamen as blackmailers, and later apologised in face of stormy protests.

Meanwhile, fearing further harassment 12 journalists have obtained anticipatory bail from the Punjab and Haryana High Court, and are hoping that their complaints will be taken seriously, now that the prime minister has been brought into the picture. Says Sanjay Arora: "Can we help it if Chautala and family want to defame themselves? All we want is that we be allowed to do our reporting." The Sirsa Journalists Union has announced, for the time being, a boycott of the Devi Lal family. —HARINDER BAWEJA in Sirsa

R.K. GUPTA

Chandra Swami at Sant Samagam

UTTAR PRADESH

Crucial Phase

VHP further hardens stand

EVEN as echoes of the shrill cries for the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya are reverberating, the VHP is all set to start on its next phase of agitation with renewed vigour. The plans finalised after the Sant Sammelan held in Allahabad from January 15 to 17 included an education campaign to be carried out by *dharmacharyas* all over the country starting February 1 and a gherao of Parliament from April 4.

The strident tone of the VHP's new strategy is mainly a reaction to the attempt of the controversial godman Chandra Swami to drive a wedge among the religious leaders who are in the forefront of the agitation. Said VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal: "The Government wants to buy time from us by promoting the swami."

The way Chandra Swami went about organising a Sant Samagam from January 12 to 14 to counter the VHP's Sant Sammelan, it was obvious that the Government was promoting him. Soon after Chandra Swami arrived in Ayodhya he announced that the Ram temple would be built where the foundation has been laid without touching the disputed structure. This was a bid to scuttle the VHP's *kar sewa*.

The official resolution passed by the VHP at the Sammelan said: "If the Chandra Shekhar Government continues to play a dual game and if Muslims continue to question the very entity of Lord Ram, there would be no use in holding talks any more."

During the buildup to the Sant Samagam, he visited Allahabad thrice in December and January and won over two religious heads—Swami Prakashanand and Swami Arjun Puri. The Akhara Parishad, the apex body of religious heads, promptly excommunicated Prakashanand.

Even though it was announced that Rajiv Gandhi would speak at the Samagam, he pulled out at the last moment due to pressure from the state unit of the Congress(I). Union Petroleum Minister Satya Prakash Malaviya, who was brought in as a replacement read out a message from the prime minister. That seemed to be the only saving grace.

The VHP on the other hand is determined not to allow Chandra Swami to enter Ayodhya, leave alone build the Ram temple. Says Uttar Pradesh Bajrang Dal chief Vinai Katiyari: "We will not allow anyone to play such silly jokes at the cost of the lives of so many *kar sewaks* who were killed in Ayodhya. We are going to stop him from entering Ayodhya."

With the VHP *trishuls* now being turned at Chandra Swami, it seems that, ironically, the purpose of his interference has been served.

—DILIP AWASTHI

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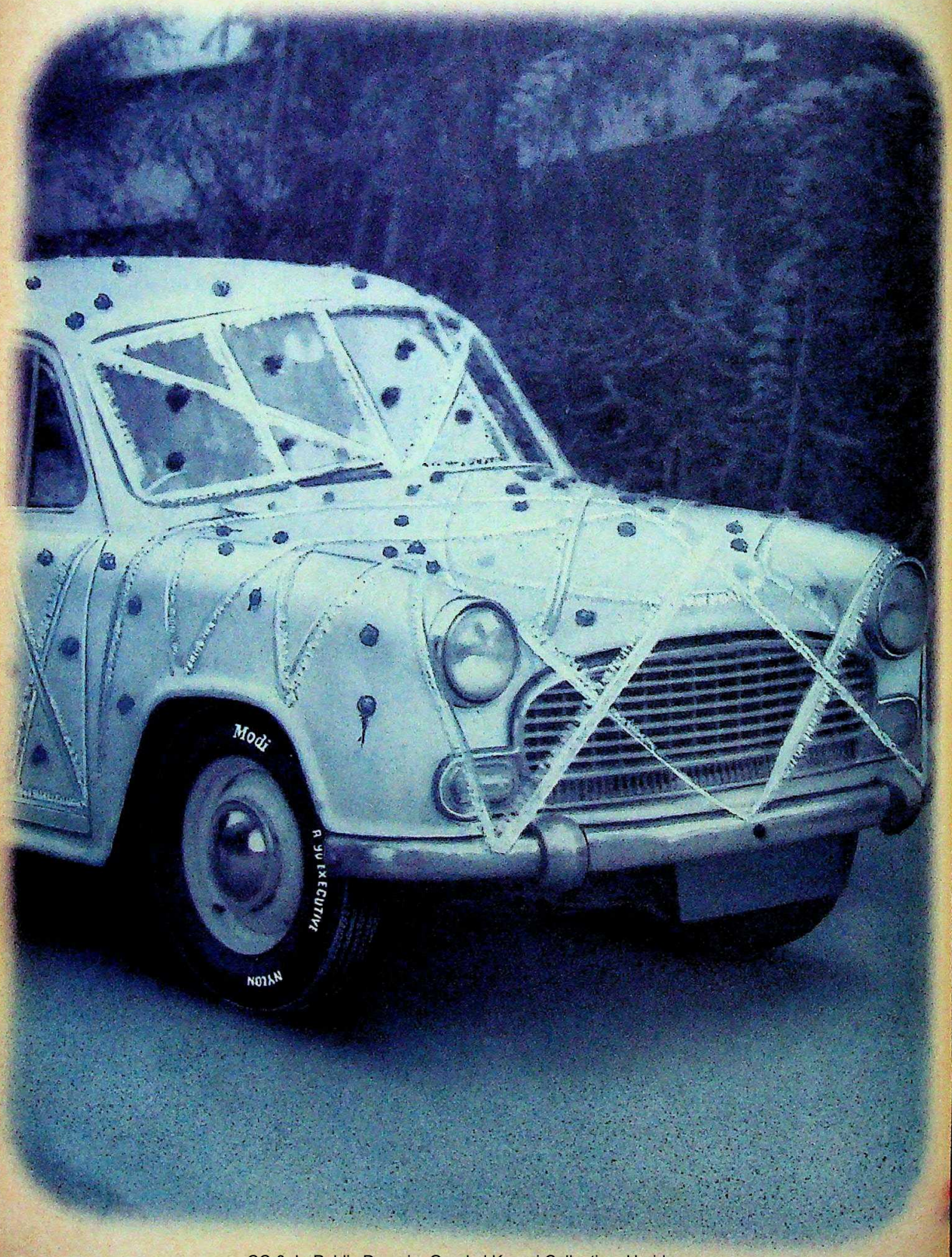

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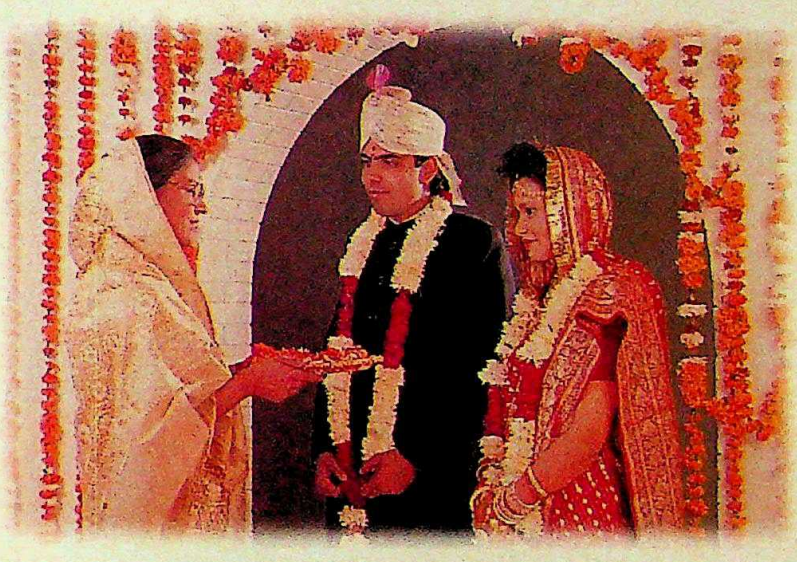

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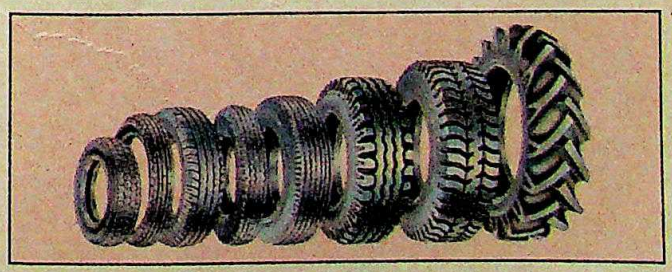

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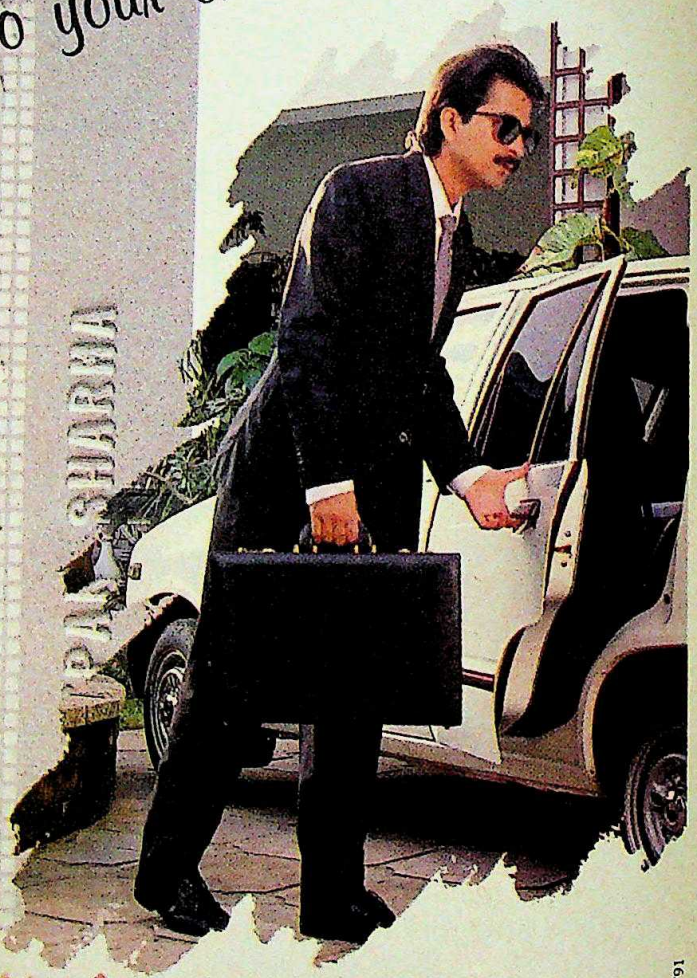

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ORISSA

Up in Arms

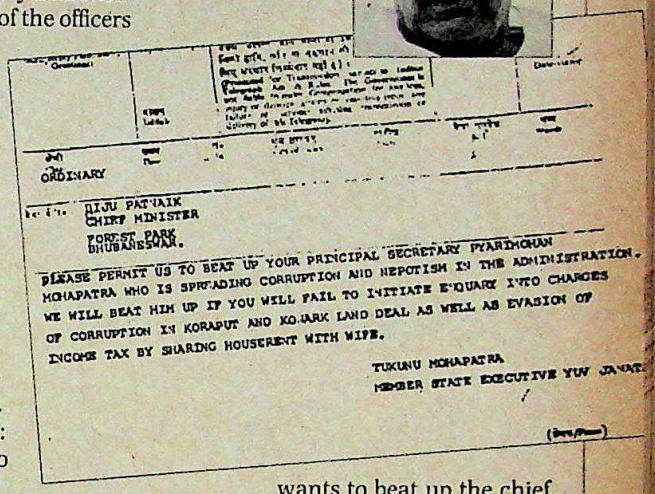
Patnaik's move boomerangs

WHEN Chief Minister Biju Patnaik announced two months ago that the people should beat up corrupt officials, little did he realise what he was in for. In his rhetorical enthusiasm he suggested that even he should not be spared. Patnaik paid for it with a bleeding nose when an angry crowd attacked him in Bhawanipatna soon after. Patnaik was however cautious to include the proviso that he be given prior intimation before the officials are assaulted. Now, the chief minister's office is flooded with requests to rough up errant officials.

The IAS Officers' Association condemned the chief minister's call, dubbing it "unconstitutional and illegal". The officers of the Orissa Administrative Service too joined issue, and demanded that the chief minister take back his remarks.

Among the officers threatened is the chief minister's Principal Secretary, Pyarimohan Mohapatra. Tukunu Mohapatra, member of the state Yuva Janata, in his telegram said: "We will beat him up if you fail to initiate an enquiry into corruption charges against him." Pyarimohan did not react while some of the officers have sought legal remedy in the face of threats. Managing Director S.P. Nanda of the Orissa State Finance Corporation threatened by Sashikant Sharma, general secretary of Jagatpur Shilpadyagi Sangh, an association of small entrepreneurs, filed a defamation case in the sub-divisional magistrate's court in Cuttack. Said a distraut Nanda: "The threat amounted to criminal intimidation."

Copy of intimation; and (inset) Patnaik



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CHIEF MINISTER
FOREST PARK
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TUKUNU MOHAPATRA
MEMBER STATE EXECUTIVE YUV JANAT

The chief minister's call has given rise to piquant situations. Girls of a government college at Anugul in Dhenkanal district have sought permission to beat up their principal. And Sunil Kumar Mohanty, a physically handicapped graduate from Phulbani district, whose job was terminated, wants to beat up the chief minister unless he was reinstated.

But Patnaik remains unfazed. He has realised that the call to beat up officials is causing a flutter in sleepy bureaucratic holes. And is keeping the media focus alive on the ageing chief minister.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

JUDICIARY

Bench Tangle

BRAJAKISHORE Sahu, a shopkeeper of Berhampore, rues his fate having forfeited his claim over disputed yet vast ancestral properties. He failed to file a title suit in time because the courts were closed.

There are many like Sahu who have been denied justice in Orissa. All because the lawyers of various courts have been on strike. The provocation: Chief Minister Biju Patnaik's off-the-cuff remarks some months ago about the setting up of high court circuit benches—one at Berhampore and the other either at Bolangir or Sambalpur. Seeing a threat to their monopoly, the Cuttack High Court lawyers went on strike. And the Bar Associations of the three districts concerned struck work demanding the location of circuit benches in their respective towns.

Patnaik's populist step is against legal conventions. The decision to institute circuit benches, where business is transacted by visiting high court judges, can be taken only by the high court in consultation with the governor. Argued Gangadhar Rath, former advocate-general: "It's illegal and contravenes the provisions laid down by the Fourth Law Commission."

Lawyers stage a dharna

Eastern Press Agency

Circuit benches will not benefit poor litigants much because the judges would hold court in the districts at most twice or thrice a year. The litigants would still need those cumbersome visits to Cuttack to file petitions, and need an extra counsel back home. "At best the benches would benefit the lawyers," points out a law official.

Meanwhile, the cabinet subcommittee set up six months ago to study the feasibility of the benches has not met even once. The state Law Minister Narsingh Mishra has now suggested that a sitting high court judge probe into the claims and counter-claims. But looking at the extreme agitation among the lawyers, unanimity over any solution to break the current impasse seems highly improbable.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

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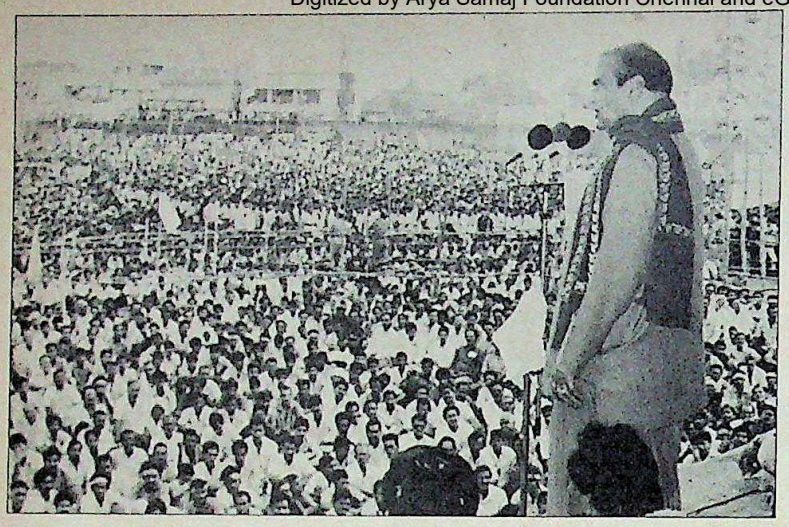


Rama Rao: garnering support

ANDHRA PRADESH

Striking Out

Rama Rao flexes his muscles

AFTER what might have seemed to his supporters an agonising period of inactivity, the Telugu Desam supremo N.T. Rama Rao, is finally back again on the muddy political trail. This time the campaign is against the alleged corrupt practices of the Chenna Reddy government.

The Telugu Desam had submitted a 20-page memorandum to Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy in January, listing allegations against Chenna Reddy. The party also announced that a massive agitation would be launched from February 10 if the Government failed to act on the memorandum.

When the chief minister asked for evidence to back the allegations, Rama Rao promptly despatched a huge black box containing files of government orders, newspaper clippings and petitions on charges of corruption and nepotism against Chenna Reddy.

Rama Rao also set off on a tour of the northern coastal districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and the southern districts of Chittoor and Cuddapah, in a bid to whip up support for his party.

He seemed to have touched a responsive chord on his tours. Says Rama Rao: "There is an overwhelming response favouring my party, and a lot of enthusiasm among the party workers." However his image took a beating when recently a few lakhs of rupees were stolen from a ramshackle van at his Ramakrishna Cine Studio in Hyderabad which gave rise to speculation about his alleged hidden wealth.

Rama Rao is as passionate as ever in his anti-Congress(I) rhetoric. "Chandra Shekhar is only a puppet in the hands of the Congress(I)," he thundered. It is transparent that he wants to garner support for his party in the next Lok Sabha elections. He thinks the elections will be held in less than six months. In the present Lok Sabha the Telegu Desam has only two members.

He is in two minds about contesting for a Lok Sabha seat. However, there have already been suggestions on the constituencies he could choose from. They include Bobbili and Anakapalle in the northern coastal districts, Hindupur in the Rayalaseema region, and Nalgonda in Telangana. Pressed to reveal his plans, Rama Rao says evasively: "I will be 69 in May and the only thing I look forward to is to serve my nation and the state."

The party has enough political ammunition to take on the Congress(I) in the state. And Rama Rao told INDIA TODAY that he has asked party activists to take up local issues connected with the failure of the Congress(I) Government, especially ones like the housing programme for the poor. He is also evolving programmes to involve women and youth, the two segments of the electorate he is sensitive to.

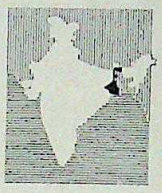
Above all he hopes that his lavish production, *Brahmarishi Vishwamitra* slated to be released in March, will remind the people of the heady days when he reigned as the screen god and herald his return to power.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

WEST BENGAL

Influx Fear

Bhutan's strife affects state



JANUARY 15, 1991. Aside from being the deadline for Saddam Hussain's withdrawal from Kuwait, this was also the date for the West Bengal Government to gear up for an influx of thousands of Nepalese asked to quit Bhutan. The Royal Bhutanese Government set the deadline for the 'outsiders'—read Nepalis—to leave the country, alleging large-scale illegal migration of Nepalese into the southern Bhutan plains.

But even as the missiles blasted Baghdad, the deadline passed rather uneventfully—and peacefully—in the slumberous Himalayan state. In fact, there wasn't any movement into West Bengal either before or after the deadline. If at all there was a stir, it was caused by the West Bengal Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Nirmal Bose's statement that the Royal Bhutanese Army was frequently intruding into Indian territory and harassing Indian citizens. He also alleged that several Indians had been shot by the Bhutanese Army. Thimphu denied the allegation saying the minister was misinformed and pointed out that anti-nationals were trying to create a rift between Bhutan and India.

Nirmal Bose

Thimphu has accused the Nepalese of trying to divide the country and create, if possible, a Gorkha or Nepali state—which would also include Sikkim and the Darjeeling hills in India. Predictably the Nepalese have drummed up considerable support in Nepal, Sikkim, the Darjeeling hills and West Bengal. According to a Left Front leader: "In Tripura the Bengalis have swamped the original settlers and the Nepalese have already done it in Sikkim. This is an irreversible process."

Even the Bhutan People's Party (BPP), spearheading the pro-democracy movement, has the support of the Left Front Government. The BPP has accused Thimphu of violating human rights, of not conducting a proper

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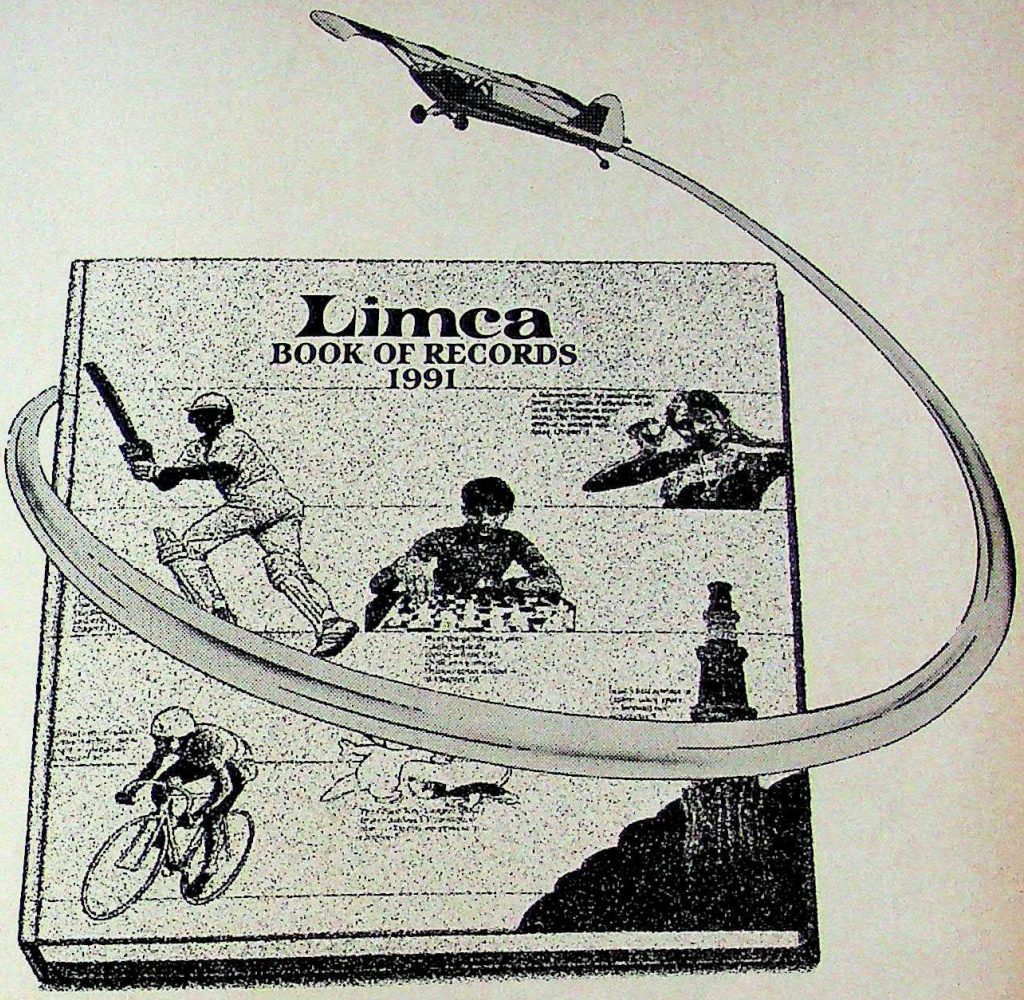

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census, of discriminating against the Nepali language and culture, and denying them their share of power.

Meanwhile, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk is obviously worried. He undertook a tour of the country whipping up anti-Nepalese feelings. Said Wangchuk: "If these people cannot identify with the rest of the Bhutanese population, they should quit." According to Bhutan's official newspaper *Kuensel*, the people even demanded the use of force to evict the 'outsiders'.

As the royal tour drove the wedge deeper between the north and the south, a civil war seemed to be staring Bhutan in the face.

There is the usual spate of claims and counter-claims. Thimphu maintains that the Nepalese in Bhutan constitute only 26 per cent of the population. The BPP pegs the figure at a much higher 53 per cent. Says the BPP President Budathoki: "In the 151-member National Assembly, the Nepalese have been given only 14 seats."

King Wangchuk: rabble-rouser

Keen to resolve the issue, Budathoki says his party wants a dialogue with the king and the introduction of democracy. Asks he: "Why is the king talking of divisions when we want popular rule for everyone?" He feels the king is shaky as democracy could only endanger the ruling clique and the royal family. The Government's efforts to 'Bhutanise' the people by enforcing a uniform language and dress code has also come under fire. But Thimphu is unaffected.

With Thimphu determined not to let the Nepalese swamp the country, the stage is clearly set for a battle of attrition. And the threat of a spillover has the West Bengal Government more than a little worried.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

Wheels Within Wheels

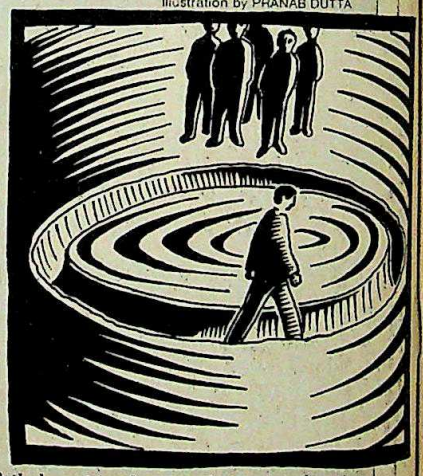
INSIDE EYE BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

WHILE the national press watches the Gulf war, V.P. Singh continues to hit the campaign trail. Mandal, masjid and Ambedkar remain his watchwords. Sharad Yadav (the OBC leader), Ram Vilas Paswan (the Harijan messiah) and an assortment of Muslim leaders are constantly by his side as he relentlessly tries to corner the combined vote-bank.

Turnouts have been good—in the south, Maharashtra, Haryana, Bihar, Etah in Uttar Pradesh. But vote-bank politics—cynically exploited—is a two-edged sword. True, the implementation of Mandal was in the Janata Dal manifesto. But its dramatic public espousal by Singh was pure politics and, to an important extent, the outcome of internecine rivalries of Yadav leaders who, brought to centre stage politics by Charan Singh's caste coalition in 1967, have merrily switched godfathers since.

Sharad Yadav, for example, who is claiming the national *subedarship* of the Yadavs' gained prominence when, as a long-term Devi Lal loyalist, he used his favoured position with the old Haryana war horse to play an influential role, distributing party tickets in Bihar during the 1989 elections. He tried to do the same in Uttar Pradesh but was checkmated in a turf battle by another Devi Lal loyalist, Mulayam Singh Yadav. But Sharad was soon to break with his mentor for reasons of his own personal ambitions. He was constantly stymied in his continuing effort to play a larger role in Uttar Pradesh politics by Devi Lal's son Om Prakash Chautala who resented Sharad's closeness to his rival brother, Ranjit. Chautala, and consequently Devi Lal, supported Mulayam's ambitions, causing Sharad to switch allegiance to V.P. Singh when Devi Lal was sacked from the Government.

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA



The hasty implementation of the Mandal report was a price Singh had to pay for the support of Sharad and Paswan who wanted to establish their own independent following through reservations.

Sharad and Paswan smell the blood of national leadership for themselves. And Singh faces a dilemma: projecting himself as leader while keeping their ambitions at bay.

Singh knows he must eventually cut them down to size. He has a handy ally in Ajit Singh who considers himself the legitimate heir to his father's Jat-Yadav vote machine and supports the Mandal cause. He also considers Uttar Pradesh—now contested by Mulayam and Sharad—his own turf. With the tacit approval of V.P. Singh, and to the chagrin of Sharad, Ajit has been promoting his own Yadav leaders in Uttar Pradesh—people like Shahjahanpur MP Satpal Yadav and Varanasi MP Kailash Nath Yadav.

The tensions are beginning to show as the Janata Dal gears up organisationally for national elections. The party president is soon to nominate senior office-bearers. Ajit seems a shoo-in for the parliamentary board post and Sharad for secretary-general. But hectic and bitter lobbying is already on in the Ajit camp to keep Sharad out.

Singh's response to managing the contradictions of his own making is to assert no leadership. During the formation of the Janata Dal and after he had formed the government, Singh was stymied and ultimately brought down by two trouble-makers he was unable to deal with—Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal. Today, Singh's vote-bank machinations have sown the seeds for the emergence of two new trouble-makers—Ajit Singh and Sharad Yadav. The wheel seems to be coming full circle.

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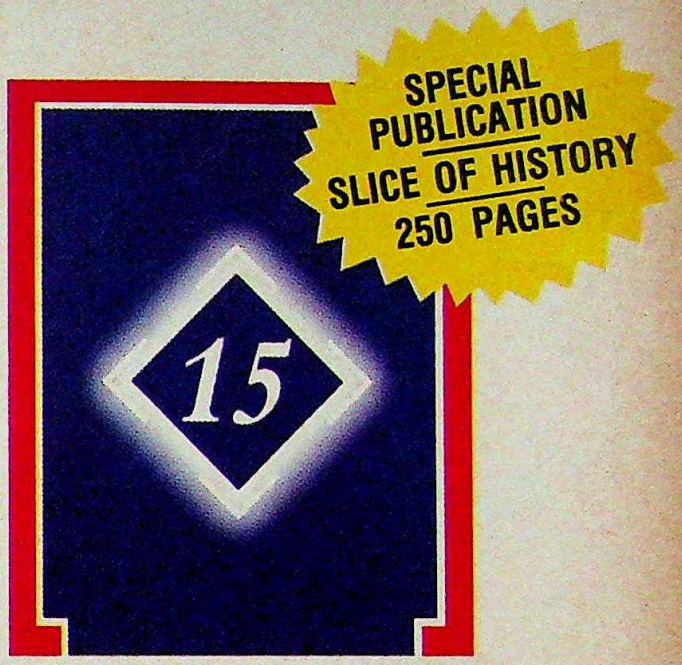

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MADHYA PRADESH

A New Leaf

Patwa retracts tendu policy

THE lowly tendu leaf, used for rolling poor man's beedis, has time and again proved the undoing of the high and the mighty. This time it has made the stronghead BJP Government in Madhya Pradesh eat humble pie. In a significant volte face last fortnight, it announced that the Rs 650-crore tendu trade would be restored to Amul-type workers' cooperatives.

The BJP on coming to power a year back had handed over the post-plucking operations to private traders. But the powerful cartel, opposed to even part-cooperativisation, quoted such low purchase rates that the Government was forced to undertake the collection. The cartel, to drive home its point, again created such problems for the Government that it could sell only one-fourth of its stock. Consequently, it has suffered a massive loss of Rs 200 crore. Quite a pinch when compared to the Rs 275-crore profit the previous year under the cooperatives.

Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa denies that his government reversed its policy due to losses. Says he: "We shall earn a profit of Rs 200 crore after we sell our stocks. But, yes, we had to change our strategy to suit the market situation." His government is pinning hopes on disposing of the 32 lakh tendu bags lying in its godowns because it now holds a monopoly and can arm-twist the traders.

It is not as simple as Patwa makes it sound. The affluent tendu and beedi lobby wields enormous power cutting across party lines. For example, the state BJP chief, Lakhiram Agarwal, is one of the tendu kings, backed by a cartel of 20-odd trading families. They have cornered a lion's share of the trade, posting profits of Rs 50 crore each year. Predictably, former chief minister Motilal Vora said: "The BJP had abandoned cooperativisation to benefit its partymen engaged in the trade."

While the BJP is embarrassed, MPCC(I) chief and former chief minister Arjun Singh's consistent stand has been vindicated. It has been proved beyond doubt that tendu trade under cooperatives yields more revenue for the Government and better pay packets for the poor tribal pluckers.

PRAKASH HATVALNE

Tendu leaves: muddled policy

Nonetheless, the flip-flops may well continue. The policy regulating the minor forest produce has remained for long a major source of corruption and scandals. Not surprising, considering the high stakes. The jungles of Madhya Pradesh yield about 60 lakh bags of tendu leaves annually—65 per cent of the country's produce. The trade earns huge revenue for the state and provides work to 10 lakh tribals for about 40 days, the seasonal collection period.

Till 1964 the leaves from government forests used to be auctioned. Then a new Act created state monopoly. However, misusing one clause that permitted the Government to appoint agents for collection and marketing, private contractors continued to rule the roost.

It was Arjun Singh who introduced limited cooperativisation in 1984. But the policy failed because the cooperative could not control the market. On regaining power in 1988, Singh decided to hand over the entire trade to cooperatives, provoking the private contractors' ire. They closed ranks and resorted to political pressure, even monetary inducements. They argued that the Government had neither the infrastructure nor the expertise needed to undertake this highly skilled job. The cooperative policy, they predicted, was doomed to fail because of administrative corruption and inefficiency.

Singh had to quit office for some reasons but made his successor, Vora, hand over the trade to cooperatives. There were handsome dividends: the annual earnings of the Government and the cooperatives jumped from Rs 52 crore to Rs 275 crore. The daily wages of a tendu plucker have also trebled to Rs 25 in the last four years.

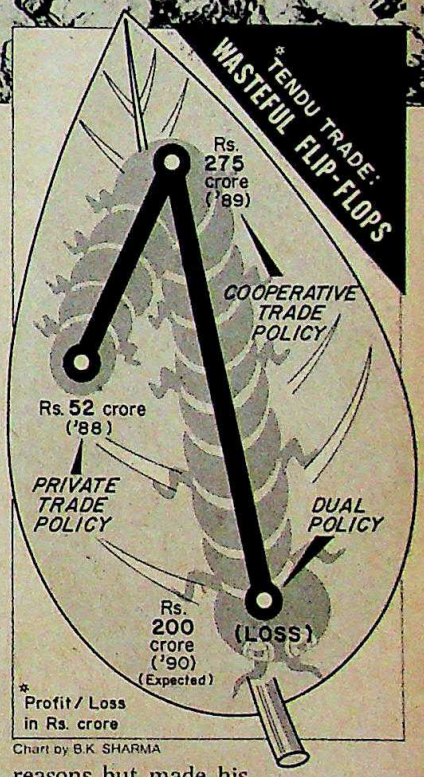

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

The BJP Government apparently bowed to the tendu lobby and introduced the 'green leaf policy', under which the cooperatives' role was limited to the plucking of leaves. But it was withdrawn after the contractors' intransigence.

The Patwa Government has lost face but turned over a new leaf.

—N.K. SINGH

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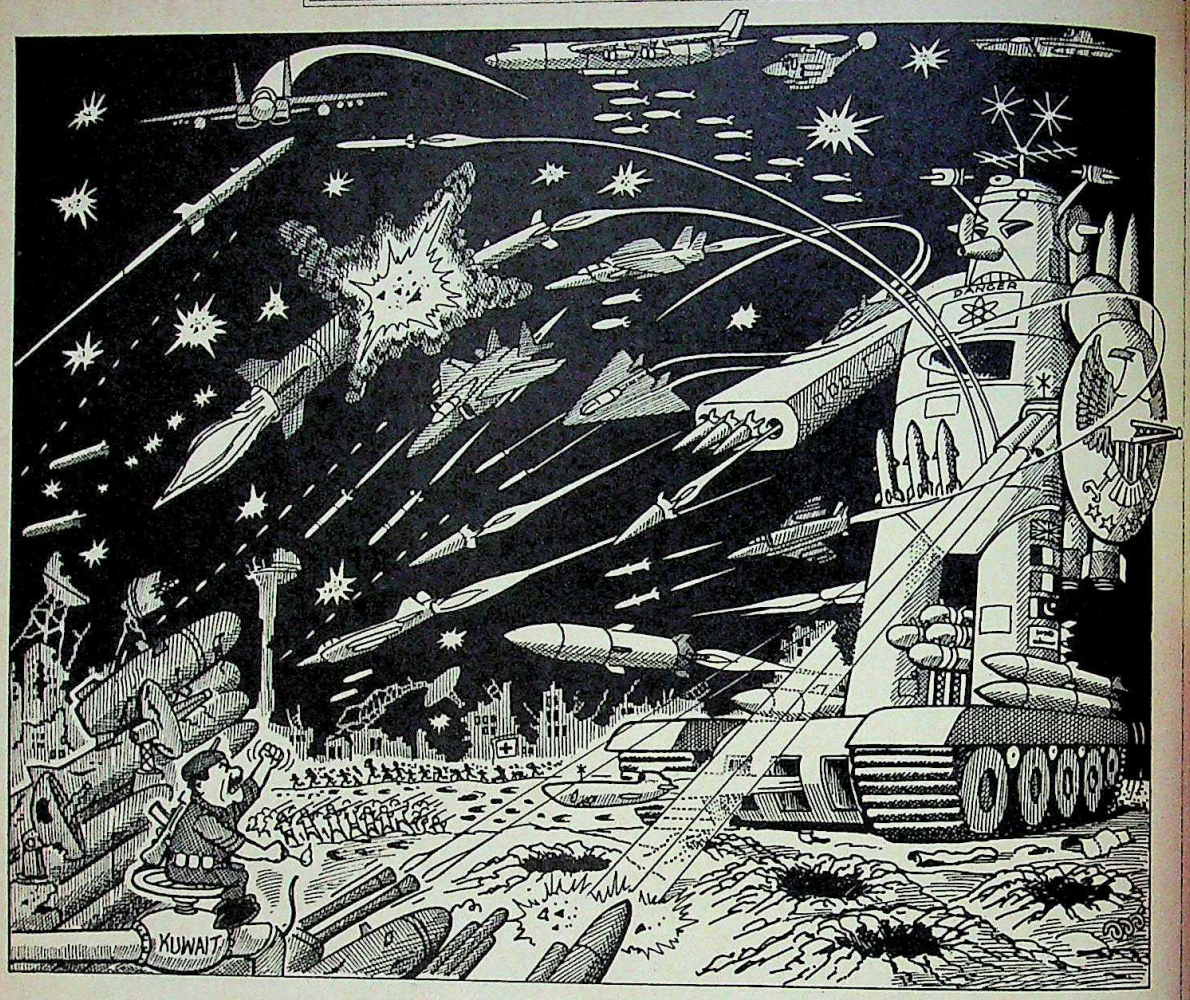

SIGN POSTS

CELEBRATED: By Professor Dankar Balwant Deodhar, the oldest living first-class cricketer, his 100th birthday at his residence in Pune. His career spanned 36 years. Deodhar was the first Indian to have scored a century in an international match in 1926. He is also a recipient of the Padmashree for his contribution to the game. The country's major one-day cricket tournament is named after him.

AWARDED: Sister Marie Julliette, 86-year-old French nun, the Legion of Honour, France's highest national honour. Like Mother Teresa, Sister Marie made India her home and served people suffering from leprosy. The award was presented by the French Ambassador, Andre Lewin.

SHUNNED: by Rajiv Gandhi, Congress(I) President, air travel in the wake of war in the Gulf. A party spokesman said that the former prime minister has decided to travel only by train for his tour of various states in view of the need to conserve oil and petrol.

ANNOUNCED: By General S.F. Rodrigues, chief of army staff, plans to recruit women into the army. According to him the age-old perception that women cannot join the army because of the difficult service conditions would have to change as it was long overdue. And the general is confident that the army would soon be able to offer women the opportunity to contribute more effectively towards national defence and security.

RESIGNED: G. Kasturi, editor of *The Hindu*. He has also stepped down from the post of managing director of Kasturi & Sons, its publishing concern. While N. Ravi has taken over as the editor of the newspaper, his brother N. Ram takes over as editor of the magazines *Frontline* and *Sportstar*.

RESIGNED: Jhaman Lal Sharma, the chief national hockey coach, who was on an extension, after India finished third in the fifth Indira Gandhi International Gold Cup Hockey Tournament in Delhi. Sharma took over as chief coach following India's debacle in the World Cup in Lahore in 1990 and was given an extension even though India lost at the Beijing Asiad. He has played a major role in revamping the team.

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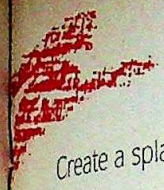

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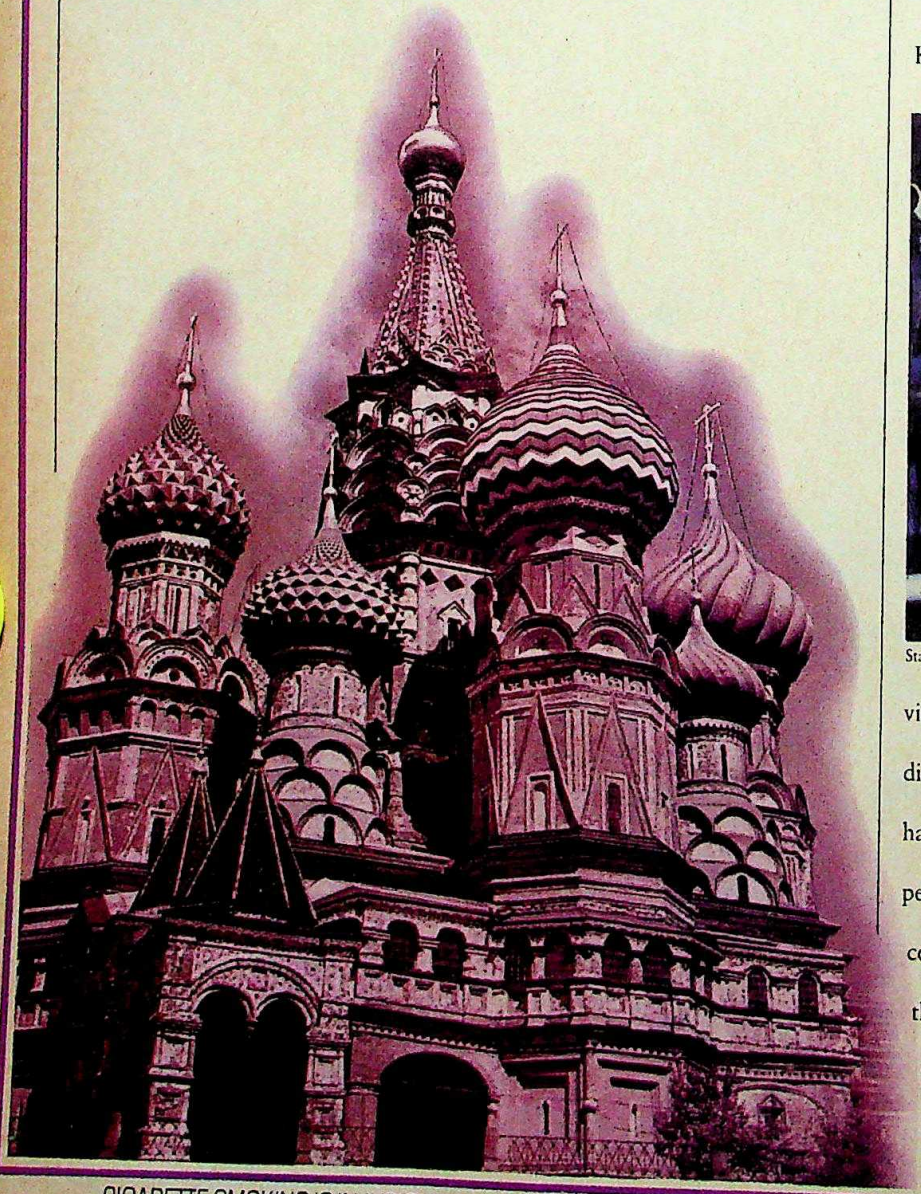

With the wind of freedom blowing across the USSR the cigarette with the unmistakable denim pack would seem the natural choice.

But then, how does one explain the success of Charms in the Middle East? Or Kingston, another export brand from VST?

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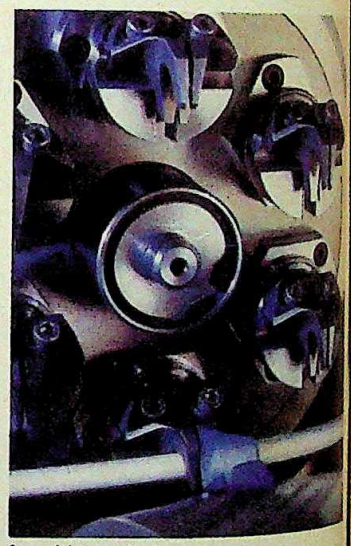

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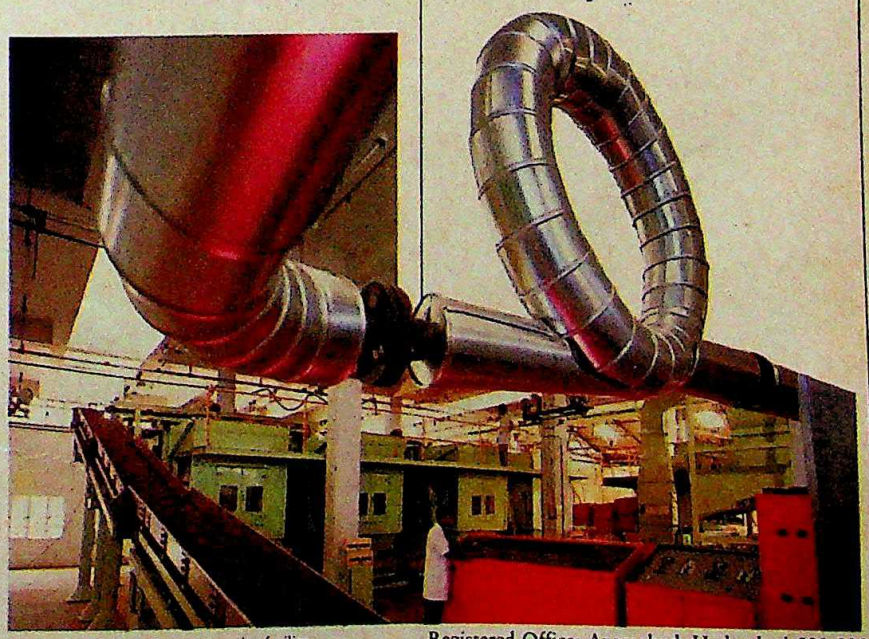

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Turn-of-the-century pieces

ANTIQUE FURNITURE

Relics of Value

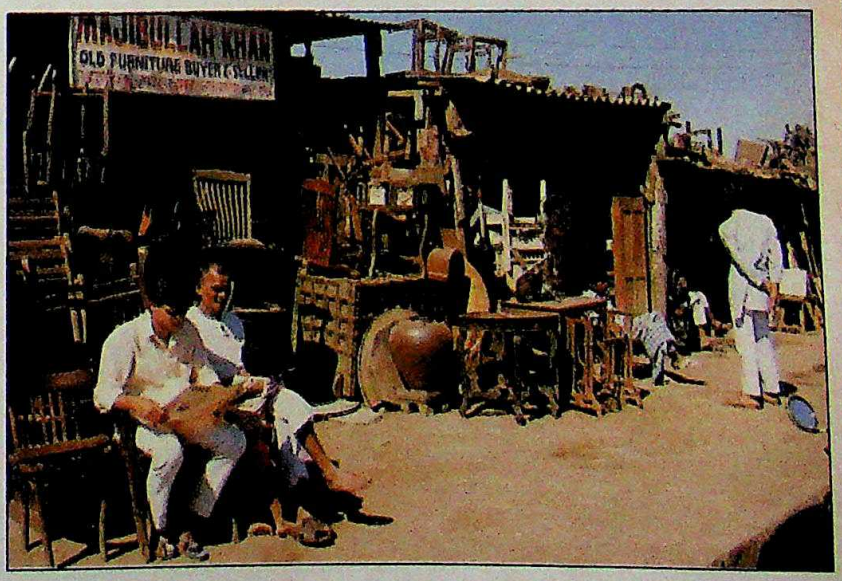
Period furniture is now a booming business

IT is clearly an incongruous sight—gleaming imported cars many a time with diplomatic number-plates parked alongside a row of shanty town structures in a suburb of Bombay. The well-heeled visitors are not on a mercy mission. They are, in fact, hunting for bargains.

For inside the dingy, tin shacks on Swami Vivekananda Road in Jogeshwari lies a viceroy's ransom in old furniture—bureaus, chests, carved cabinets, inlay cupboards, chairs and upholstered setees created long ago by master craftsmen in exquisite designs from high quality wood like mahogany, Burma teak or rosewood. After decades of neglect and decay, these handsome objects which once adorned the homes of the gentry have come to life again, as turn-of-the-century colonial furniture becomes a booming business in India.

What was once an exclusive business—buying and restoring period furniture—which catered to a select group of collectors has now brought wealth and renown even to the *kabadiwalas* of Jogeshwari, who frequently entertain buyers from as far away as Australia and Italy. The Jogeshwari dealers have begun to provide serious competition to the legendary junk and antique shops of south Bombay's Chor Bazaar. But even the pioneers in the colonial furniture business, like Laurance Tipton and Mahendra Doshi in Bombay or O.P. Jain in Delhi, have to compete now with many new entrepreneurs as the yuppie generation develops a taste for elegant artefacts. "India is the only country where old furniture is still affordable, even as more people become aware of the richness of this colonial heritage," says Doshi.

Interestingly, unlike other great ancient civilisations like Egypt or China, furniture in India was mostly thrones and royal beds until the arrival of the maritime powers from Europe. The Portuguese, the French and the British brought with them a variety of furniture, and even a few cabinet-makers as colonial rule was fully established by the late 19th century. Indian princes and zamindars quickly adopted the new life-style, and shipped furniture from Europe or got local craftsmen to copy the imported pieces. Its use proliferated. Most of the old



Used furniture bazaar in Bombay

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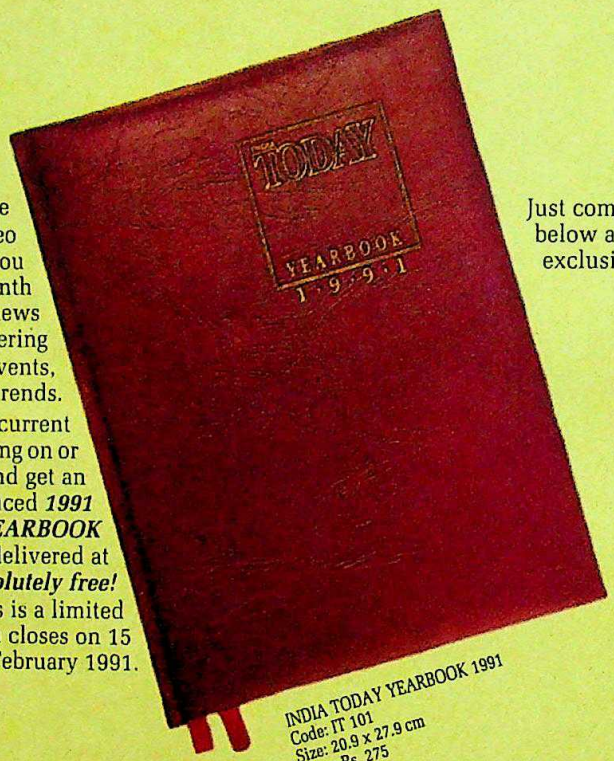

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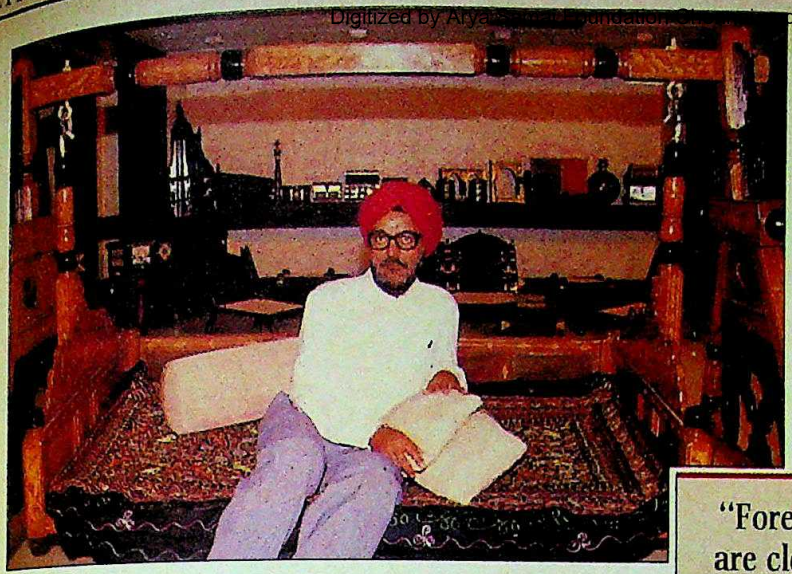

furniture in India therefore dates to no earlier than the late 19th century.

INDIANS are notorious for the poor maintenance of furniture, and what was not completely destroyed soon started showing up in junk shops as the reigning style changed with Independence from art deco to the hideously modern pseudo-Scandinavian which still enjoys a measure of mass popularity. But lonely collectors scouring urban junk bazaars, foreign buyers and reputed restorers like Tipton and Doshi helped preserve the colonial heritage and gradually inculcate a taste for period furniture. Some collectors, for instance Uma Rao of Bangalore or Amarjit Singh Bakshi of Jodhpur, turned dealers.

And now, as the demand for colonial furniture soars, a new type of young entrepreneur is entering the business. Bombay housewife Sujata Shah Singh took a loan from the State Bank of India two years ago and is already planning her third major show of Indo-Portuguese furniture; Taj Mahal Hotel executive Nilofer Rustomji resigned her job, moved to a coffee plantation near Kodaikanal with her husband and hunts for old furniture in south India; business correspondent Ashish Oza gave up journalism and now crisscrosses Gujarat looking for furniture for city clients. "People want to do up their homes stylishly now, and we are providing a quality product at a damn good price," says Sujata Singh.

When British expatriate Tipton, who stayed on after retiring from a tobacco company, started his business in the '60s in partnership with Shivram Shetty, he picked up his first pieces of furniture from Bombay's Chor Bazaar.

> "Foreigners are cleaning out old furniture in Rajasthan."
>
> A.S. BAKSHI
> *Antique collector*

Old furniture, often in need of major restoration, is to be found in a variety of places—princely houses in Rajasthan, Gujarat and West Bengal, crumbling bungalows in Goa, Pondicherry or Tamil Nadu, old zamindar mansions in north Calcutta or in Uttar Pradesh, sometimes even the odd piece from Rashtrapati Bhavan. Sujata Singh plans to drive around Saurashtra in a jeep looking for old furniture. "In small town gentry have also gone up, the profit margin is high enough to make the business very lucrative. For instance, a dealer could pick up an old cupboard made of teak for just Rs 3,000 in a Saurashtra town. It will sell for at least Rs 15,000 in Bombay. And if a top dealer were to sell it after proper restoration, the price-tag will go beyond Rs 25,000. It will still be at least Rs 5,000 cheaper than getting a replica made.

Prices for some other top-quality restored furniture are: chairs around Rs 2,000; large rosewood sofa set Rs 65,000; bureau with book-shelf Rs 25,000; sideboard Rs 27,000; large roll-top desk Rs 25,000; four-poster beds Rs 27,000; and dining-tables, from Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000. And dealers predict that prices will go up further. —M. RAHMAN

Restoring period furniture

PRICES

Soaring Skyward

SERIOUS collectors of colonial furniture hunt for bargains almost as avidly as they look for rare and exquisite pieces. But with demand shooting up and foreign buyers invading even remote junk markets and private mansions, the collectors have to be very lucky to strike a bargain in any of the big cities. Just a decade ago, after a new junk market came up in Bombay's faraway Jogeshwari suburb, a handsome rosewood chest of drawers could be purchased for less than Rs 1,000. Today, it will cost 10 times as much in the same shop. Bentwood chairs, made popular by Irani restaurants, which used to cost Rs 50, are now marked at a steep Rs 450.

Bangalore dealer Uma Rao recalls that when she began collecting in the '60s, a Burmese ebony screen with scenes from the Ramayana carved on it sold for just Rs 1,500. Today a resourceful buyer, more likely a foreigner, could even bid up to a lakh of rupees for the piece.

So dealers have to go further into the interior in search of bargains. But even though prices for what is regarded as junk furniture by the

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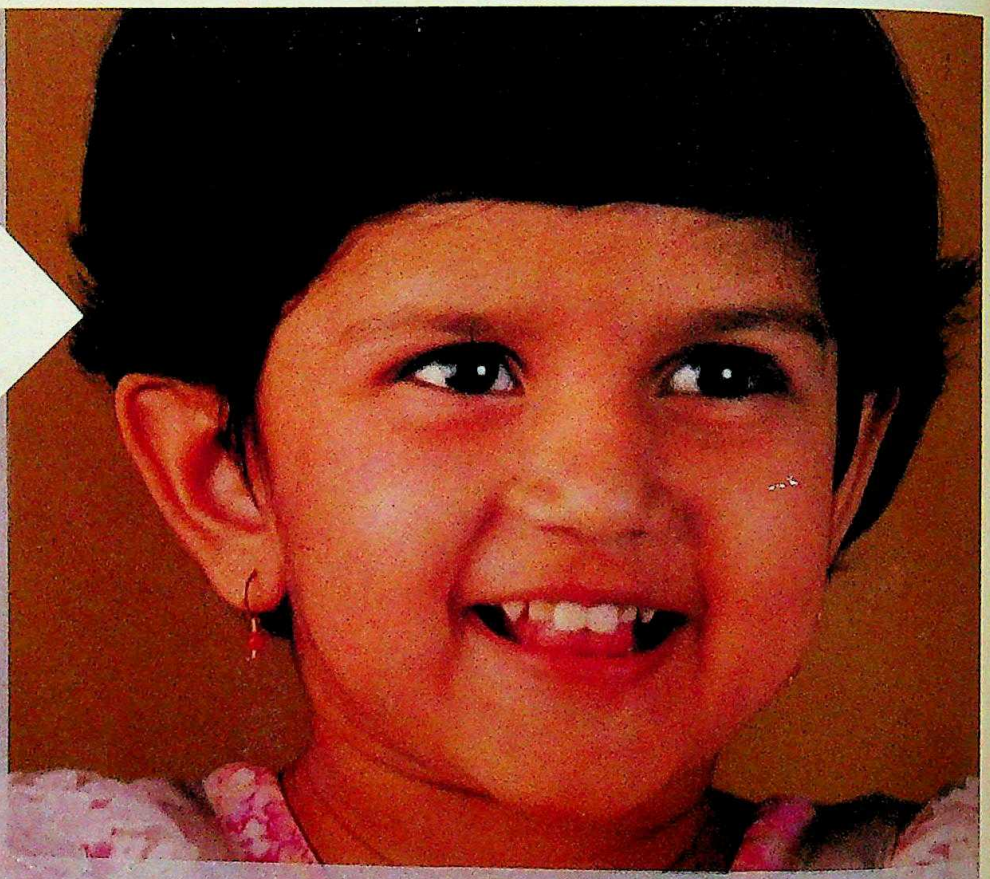

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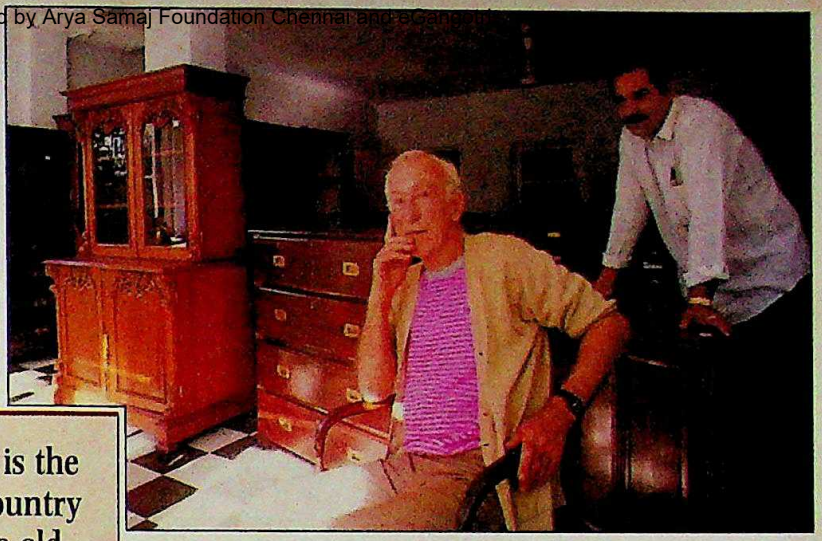
the '60s, you could pick up very good pieces in Chor Bazaar. Now you have to be extremely lucky to get the same quality," says Tipton.

But prices of old furniture in India are still very low compared to those in the developed countries. As a result, besides individual collectors from diplomatic missions or multinational companies, several wholesale foreign dealers are carting away containerloads of colonial furniture. "Foreigners, particularly Italians, are paying fabulous prices and cleaning out the old furniture from Rajasthan," complains Bakshi. The same story is being repeated in Delhi, Bombay and on the west coast. "We created an awareness of old furniture for the benefit of Indians. But foreigners, with more resources, are proving smarter," bemoans Jain.

Last fortnight, three Italian dealers picked up all the old display cupboards in Jogeshwari. From Bangalore last year, lorryloads of camphor chests, planter's chairs and glass balls for decorating Christmas trees were taken out for export. Jain estimates that by the turn of the century, the market in colonial furniture will disappear from India, since the supply will be exhausted.

SOME dealers in the junk markets have started passing off newly-made reproductions as old furniture to the uninitiated. But this is as yet on a small scale, because it costs much more in India to make a reproduction than to restore an old piece of furniture.



"India is the only country where old furniture is still affordable."

TIPTON and SHETTY
Buyers and restorers

Moreover, the quality of wood available today is very inferior. Rosewood is restricted, and even the best Indian teak is no match for seasoned, turn-of-the-century Burma teak.

However, in Calcutta, where old sources of colonial furniture—homes of Jews, Anglo-Indians and zamindars—have either disappeared or almost dried up, fake antiques dominate the market. Says a dealer: "Eighty per cent of the business here depends on copies." Calcutta's biggest dealer, Samar Chanda, also maintains that unlike in Delhi or Bombay, hardly any foreigners are buying antiques in Calcutta.

In India, unlike in the West, the interest in period furniture has not yet created a market for reproductions. Only a few furniture-makers have developed a reputation for good quality replicas like Janice Craft in Delhi and Majid Khan of Noah's Ark in Bombay. Says Khan, whose father started as a Chor Bazaar dealer: "Unlike bronze statues or porcelain jars, furniture can be copied by any good craftsman. And we still have many fine carpenters with us."

But the collectors and furniture restorers have not only created an awareness in India for a fascinating aspect of the country's heritage, but also ensured that the examples of fine craftsmanship are not destroyed by ignorance or misuse. For Indian craftsmen did much more than just blindly copy imported furniture. Whether the original designs came from England or France or Portugal, distinctive elements were often introduced by local craftsmen to give colonial furniture a uniquely Indian look. For instance, the sunburst motif on cupboards and sideboards came from France and became very popular with Parsis and Gujaratis. "We magnified it, glorified it, and ended up with 30 to 40 variations. A book can be written just on the sunburst motif in colonial Indian furniture," points out Doshi.

"People want to do up their homes stylishly now."

SUJATA SINGH
Period furniture dealer

With the growing popularity of colonial furniture in India, much more which is decaying in crumbling houses will be saved and restored. But with the large-scale purchases by foreign dealers, not too many fine specimens of the turn-of-the-century furniture maker's skill may find their way into Indian homes.—M. RAHMAN with bureau reports

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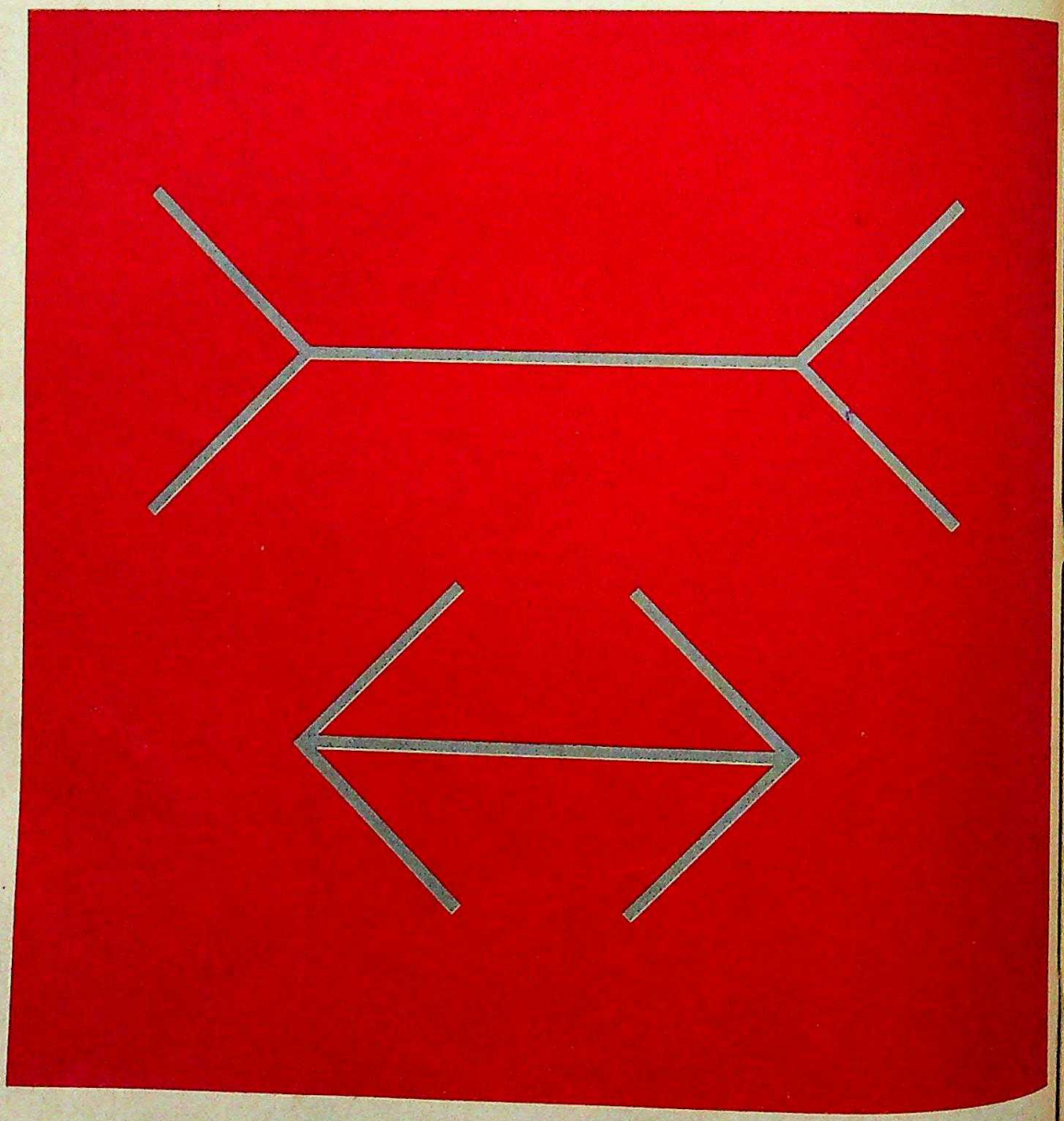
HOW CAN A TEXTILE MILL TURN ITS PROBLEMS INTO PROFITS? THIS IS BEST EXPLAINED BY THE PICTURE BELOW.

WHICH OF THE TWO STRAIGHT LINES IS LONGER?



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You'd swear the line on top is longer.

But if you measure both lines, you'll find they're exactly the same length.

This famous optical illusion is a good example of what happens with a business problem.

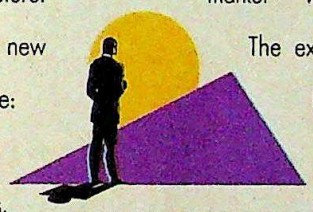
People tend to jump to conclusions based on what they think they're seeing.

But when you take a fresh look at the problem, you often get a different picture.

Most people looked at the problems of the textile industry and shrugged their shoulders.

We looked at exactly the same problems from a different angle. And saw an industry with a great future.

We couldn't find a word to describe this new way of looking at things. So we invented one: we called it Renovision.



RENOVISION: A NEW BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE.

To fully appreciate how Renovision works, you'll have to understand what the textile industry was up against a couple of years ago.

The root of the problem was a new kind of competition: from thousands of 'powerlooms' that had sprung up all over the country.

These small-scale operations were making fabric at a lower cost than any mill could. And selling it at a lower price.

Most customers found this fabric quite acceptable. So the powerlooms captured a large chunk of the textile market.

A difficult situation ? Not if you apply the principles of Renovision.

Sometimes, the best way to solve a business problem is to ignore it.

The conventional point of view said: "We have to find a way to fight the powerlooms."

Renovision made us see it differently: "Why waste our energy fighting the powerlooms?"

Instead, we set out to create our own position of strength: high value, high quality fabrics that could never be made by the powerlooms.

High value fabrics ? Our critics laughed. How much high value fabric was it possible to sell in India ?

Once again, Renovision showed us a way out.

If your product isn't right for the market, don't change the product. Change the market.

It suddenly became obvious that there was no reason to keep struggling in the Indian market.

Instead, we shifted our attention to the massive export market — worth Rs. 198,000 crores.

The export market demands long lengths of flawless fabric. And consistency from batch to batch.

This is something Arvind is in an excellent position to meet. We've invested heavily in new technology, and have our own R&D facilities.

Arvind. Living proof that Renovision works.

In the last one year, Arvind's sales have grown to Rs. 176 crores. Exports have doubled to Rs. 22 crores.

Reserves are up to Rs. 38 crores. And net profits to Rs. 5.25 crores — an increase of 66%. In the process, our investors' earnings per share have risen to Rs. 7.36.

We've created premium products specially for the export market: like two-ply pinpoint shirtings, superfine cottons and original denim.

And the response from our international customers has been so good, we're soon commissioning a new plant to make denim for export only.

Quite obviously, Renovision is working wonders at the Arvind Mills. From whichever angle you choose to look at it.

Arvind

Trikaya Grey/Ogilvy Ahmed 3.90

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CONSULTANCY

Money in Methods

With large investments, stiff competition and no room for any mistakes, companies are now seeking professional guidance.

By S.N. VASUKI

► *THE Bombay Stock Exchange has an ambitious computerisation programme which needs to be assessed.*

► *Jeep manufacturer Mahindra & Mahindra plans to review existing practices and would rather not do the job in-house.*

► *Tata Industries is reviewing its 1983 corporate plan to formulate a new investment strategy for the next 10 years.*

IT'S time to call in an outsider. When the money involved is enormous and competition in the market-place intense, there is no room for goof-ups. The stakes being high, Indian companies are indulging in what they have never done before: soul-searching.

All big companies are trying to come to grips with the nuts and bolts of the business. Why, for instance, does it take one hour to produce a ball-bearing while the competitor takes just 20 minutes? And they are all rushing to meet management consultants. But like good ideas, good management consultants are in short supply.

Parasite, armchair critic—that's the common perception of a consultant. In recent years such perceptions are blurring as the management consultancy business booms. Multinationals, public sector and family-owned organisations are hiring consultants by the droves, and paying a fortune. Says D.N. Ghosh, former State Bank of India (SBI) chairman and director of the Management Development Institute: "The consultancy business has grown rapidly. But, there are no checks and balances."

Unsavoury practices thus abound. So you have recruitment consultants who have made a racket of placing the same top executive in different companies. Once the headhunting fees are collected, he then hunts the same head for a rival company. For a fee, of course. Then there are management consultants who play hatchetmen. The chief executive of an engineering company thinks of diversifying into shipping—an idea his top executives are uncomfortable with. Never mind. For a small price, you can have a 'consultant' poking around the office for a couple of days at the end of which—lo, behold—he gives his impartial solution. Just what the chief executive had been saying.

The Management Consultants' Association of India (MCAI), the apex body of the consultancy profession, has a code of conduct regulating its 140-odd members. But that still leaves at least another 2,000 'consultants' beyond the pale of regulation. And their tribe is growing as everyone is jumping onto the consultancy bandwagon.

"Old chief executives don't die," says an observer, "they become consultants." Everyone from retired chief executives to disgruntled middle-level managers seek fame and fortune in the consultancy business. So how do you separate the wheat from the chaff? Here's a guide to the brands of consultants available.

► Briefcase Consultants: The Nirma of the business. Cheap and efficient service. Works out of a briefcase and attempts to live off a company's minor travails. Hangs around a company's reception area at odd hours. Utility: fixing airline tickets, getting telephone and fax lines. Fees: flexible.

► Retirement Gurus: Usually retired chief executives of companies, particularly from the public sector. Companies tap them because they have access to top bureaucrats in Delhi. Fees: fancy. The guru can even inform companies as to which section officer is sitting on a file and what to do about it. Can also help in getting bank loans.

► The Specialists:: Two broad categories. The placement wallas recruit key personnel for companies. It's a booming

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA

BRIEFCASE CONSULTANTS

Cheap and efficient. Usually work out of briefcases. Undertake odd jobs. Flexible fees.

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business as there is a shortage of talent. Financial consultants advise companies on things like raising money from the stock-market.

▸ Organisation Consultants: Aristocracy of the management consultancy business. Here consultants see themselves as blue-blooded professionals offering refined advice. They are hired to advise on strategic issues—corporate plans, information technology, management structures and competitive strategies. Fees: up to Rs 50 lakh.

THE first three categories of the consultancy business have burgeoned into a cottage industry. There is a free-for-all between all the players, and competitors indulge in fierce price-cutting. Fees range from a piffling Rs 500 per man-day to Rs 2,500-plus, depending on reputation. Organisation consultancy is small in numbers and high on talent.

It is the last segment of the business which is at the quickest pace. A small Rs 5-crore business of five years ago has today expanded into a Rs 25-crore-plus market. Credibility is all important, making the barriers to entry high.

The organisation consultancy business has been carved up between the lone rangers and the large firms. The big brother of the business is S.K. Bhattacharyya. Others include Sharu Rangnekar, who advises the Birlas, ex-Hindustan Lever chairman Vasant Rajadhyaksha, New Delhi-based M.B. Athreya, Uday Parekh, R.L. Maheswari and Walter Vieira.

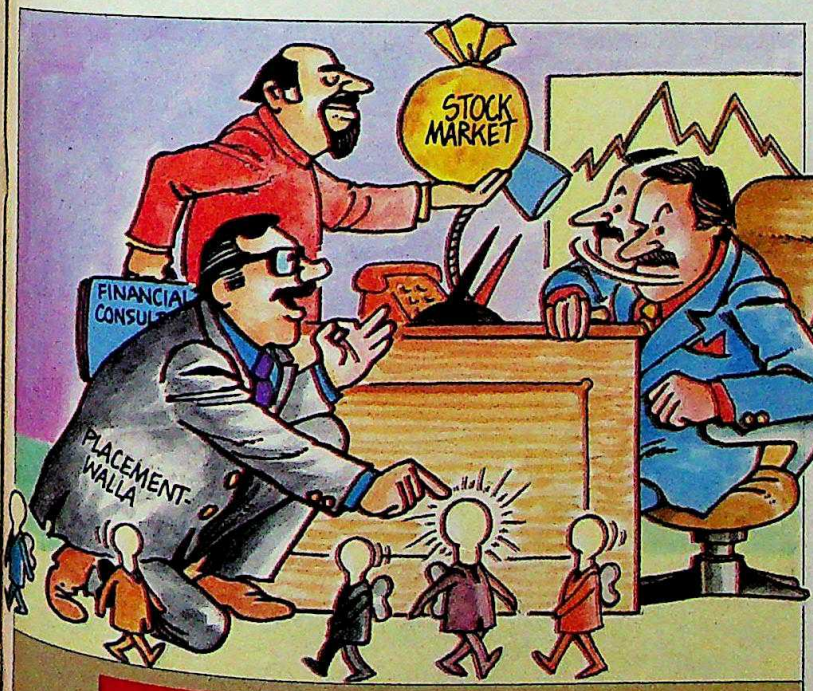
RETIREMENT GURUS

Normally retired chief executives. Access to top bureaucrats. Definitely more expensive.

If the lone rangers are the boutiques of the consultancy business, the large firm is the supermarket. Tata Consultancy Services, A.F. Ferguson, Price Waterhouse, S.B. Billimoria and Arthur Andersen collectively retain several hundred consultants on their rolls and can offer a variety of services.

It is obvious that the consultancy business has matured in the last five years. Says Bhattacharyya, head of Management Structure and Systems: "Companies can better use a consultant's advice now. The learning process is over, which is a positive trend." Athreya also believes that the market has matured. "It was the multinationals who were inclined to use consultants' advice first. But now the public sector is receptive to the idea," he says. Bharat Heavy Electricals, for example, has reorganised its operations on the basis of business groups to focus its activities more clearly. A consultant helped the process. Ditto for the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, which has simulated internal competition by creating geography-based profit centres. The Steel Authority of India Ltd used consultants to delegate powers down to its operating plants, and later even within the plants to the key managers.

Until the early '70s most of the work



THE SPECIALISTS

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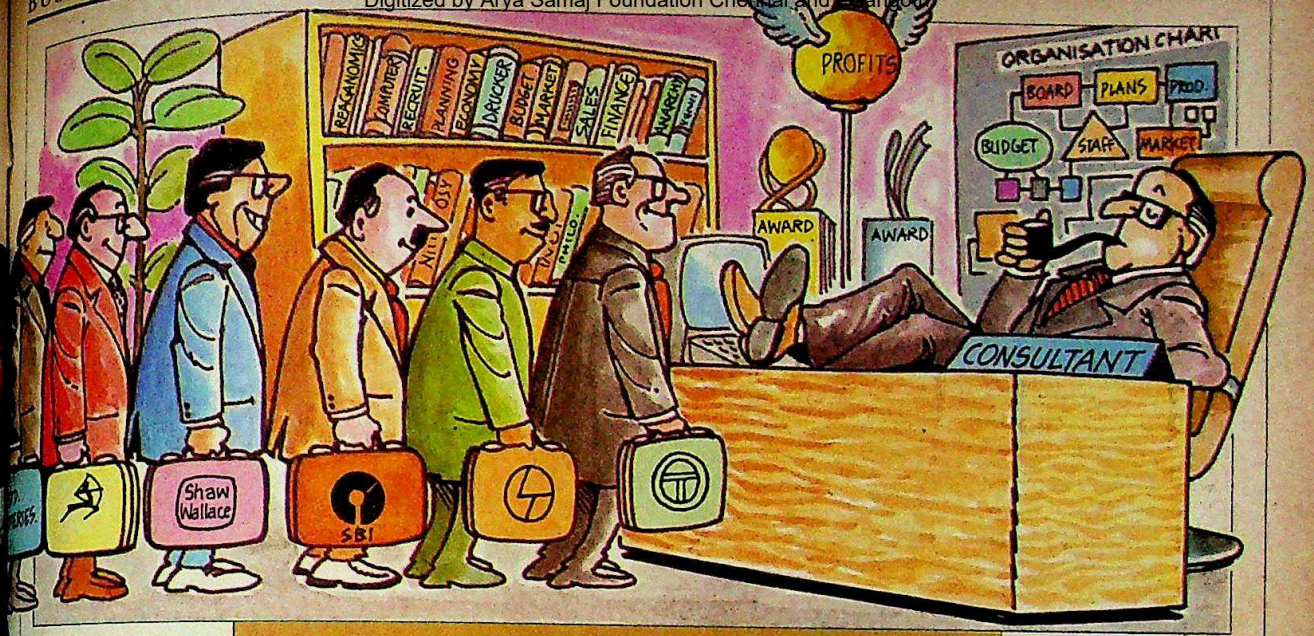

ORGANISATION CONSULTANTS

The creme de la creme. Their focus: corporate restructuring and strategy, computerisation.

that is currently farmed out routinely to consultants was done in-house. It was up to a public sector bank to set the ball rolling. In 1970, one year after bank nationalisation, SBI chairman R.K. Talwar conducted a major reorganisation of the bank. He hired Ishwar Dayal and Bhattacharyya, who was then on the faculty of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, to take a look-see and make recommendations. Talwar figured that the challenge in the post-nationalisation era was managing a huge branch network and also integration of the different businesses of the bank. After the punditry was through, what followed was a major reorganisation of the bank's management structure, which still continues unaltered. Says Ghosh: "When I took over as SBI chairman I realised that the reorganisation was the turning point in the bank's operations. There was little I could add to it."

Soon after, Larsen & Toubro and ITC decided to seek outside help to reorganise themselves into distinct business groups. Says Bhattacharyya: "These companies hired outside consultants because they realised that an outsider could bring a fresh perspective." Companies that have carried out such exercises recently include SBI Capital Markets, the merchant banking subsidiary of SBI, Shaw Wallace, Air India and Standard Batteries.

Two other segments where the consultancy business is booming is in drawing up a company's corporate plan and in advising the acquisition of computer systems. The growth of the capital markets and relaxations in licensing policies have provided a further impetus to the consultancy vocation. With mega-projects involving investments of over Rs 200 crore becoming routine, companies are supplementing in-house efforts with the aid of hired consultants.

TATA Industries has prepared a new blueprint for investment up to the year 2000. An earlier plan resulted in fresh investment in several high-technology areas—quartz watches, oil drilling, telecommunications. Today, with the help of a consultant, the company is reviewing progress and giving finishing touches to the new plan. Says E.A. Kshirsagar, head of the consultancy division of A.F. Ferguson: "Corporate planning used to be just crystal-ball gazing. Today companies insist that the plans should have substance." A few years ago a cement company could set up a plant knowing it had a ready market. "Today the first question that a cement company asks a consultant is: where can I sell?" he says.

A similar question worries consultants too, for there is an army of them trying to sell their services. Unethical practices, where companies play one consultant against another to obtain cut-rate services, are not unknown. Larger firms with high overhead costs are battling it out for market share, but due to their credibility and professionalism are still able to edge out smaller firms which undercut them. Arthur Andersen recently got a Rs 40-lakh order even though its nearest competitor had quoted a paltry sum. Says Sid Khanna of Arthur Andersen: "Companies look beyond costs for a good job."

Competition in the information technology segment of the consultancy business is fierce. Companies are computerising operations at a manic pace but most decisions to buy hardware are taken in isolation of software requirements. This is the niche that consultants view as a golden market opportunity. Says F.C. Kohli, managing director of Tata Consultancy: "This segment is still nascent. There is tremendous scope for consultants."

For the army of consultants out there in the field, however, the bread-and-butter business is in training. A survey conducted a few years back by Colonel N.K. Singh of the Administrative Staff College of India in Hyderabad found that 56 of the 129 consultancy firms were into some training programme or the other for clients.

There's clearly money in it for all. Companies see both types of consultants—the lone-rangers and those who move in herds—as magicians who, by waving a wand, can send plummeting financial graphs shooting upward and open new doors to prosperity.

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MISUSING PUBLIC MONEY

COMPANIES raising money from the public through share and debenture issues often end up receiving much more than what they ask for. But these firms part with the excess only with the greatest reluctance. The reason is simple: these sums can be conveniently used in the short term as interest-free working capital. So what's new? Answer: there are big names and big money involved in this unethical practice.

Leading the list in 1990 was the Singhania group's Raymond Synthetics which asked for Rs 17 crore, received subscriptions worth Rs 600 crore and hung on to the balance. Then comes SM Dyechem which has not refunded Rs 212 crore, Lloyds Steel Rs 200 crore, Incab Rs 160 crore, Powmex Steels Rs 172 crore and Videocon VCR Rs 117 crore. These six companies accounted for roughly two-thirds of the total amount of Rs 2,100 crore not refunded within the stipulated time. And only one-fourth of this, Rs 408 crore, was sought to be raised.

ROYAL RENDEZVOUS

WHEN Britain's Prince Charles visits India this fortnight, an important pow-vow planned involves a seminar with Indian business leaders. Is the prince trying to peddle British commercial interests? Not really. His objective is to kick off an initiative to involve business in rural development. The guest list at the February 10 seminar in Delhi includes Ratan Tata, C.K. Birla, R.J. Shahaney, Rajan Nanda, A.K. Khosla and Arvind Mafatlal. Also invited are representatives of non-governmental organisations, to see whether business can work in tandem with them for rural development.

FREE FALL

NET collections of income tax levied on companies have come down considerably in the recent times. Between April and October last year, the figure was just over Rs 1,000 crore against Rs 1,233 crore in the corresponding seven months of 1989. Paradoxically, corporate profits rose during the period. But sources in the Central Board of Direct Taxes attribute the fall in tax collections to "unusually" high refunds. Thus, while gross tax collections between April and October went up from Rs 1,920 crore to Rs 2,324 crore, refunds almost doubled from Rs 687 crore to Rs 1,324 crore. It seems that a number of public sector banks have been the main beneficiaries of the Income Tax Department's policy of expeditiously returning the excess taxes collected.

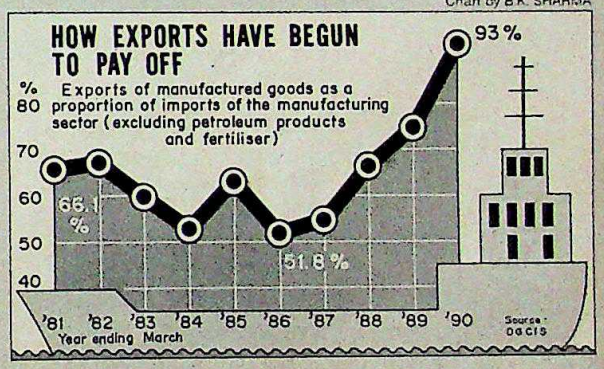
ROUGH RIDE

THANKS to the foreign exchange crunch, the Government is wary of sanctioning hard currency for imports unless it is accompanied by a commitment to export. For instance, soda ash manufacturers recently asked the Commerce Ministry to release Rs 4 crore in foreign exchange to import high-grade coking coal from Australia. The ministry agreed, but only on the condition that the manufacturers would agree to earn at least four times the amount by exporting soda ash. The three soda ash bigwigs in the Tata, Birla and Dalmia groups then decided it would be better to export at a loss (of around 10 per cent of the selling price) instead of perennially griping about the poor quality of Indian coal and keeping manufacturing capacity lying idle. The export proposal is now being finalised.

IMPORT-EXPORT

IF you think liberalisation is what's responsible for the foreign exchange crunch, think again. With the help of disaggregated trade data for the '80s, an internal study of the Industry Ministry shows that the manufacturing sector has begun paying for its imports. From the pits in

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



1985-86, when export of manufacturing goods paid for a mere 51.8 percent of the sector's imports, the percentage steadily increased thereafter and reached a respectable 93 in 1989-90. The only caveat: the figures exclude imports of petroleum products and fertilisers.

TAXING PROBLEMS

IN late December, the Government changed depreciation norms thereby effectively hiking the income tax rates on companies. Depreciation on written-down values of assets has been restricted to 75 per cent of the usually tax-deductible charge. Translated, this means that for every Rs 100 that a company would have claimed as tax deduction on depreciation, it will now be allowed to claim only Rs 75 and will pay tax on the remaining Rs 25. The move is expected to garner more than Rs 750 crore for the exchequer this financial year. But the bite on the private sector will not be as hard as the number suggests since some 40 per cent of the amount will come from public sector companies. This is a classic example of money moving from one pocket of the Government to another. The story may be repeated if the Government is serious about cutting the fertiliser subsidy. It is believed that paring subsidies on fertiliser sales will help the Governments cut its spending. But the fact is that 84 per cent of the fertiliser subsidy goes to companies in the public and cooperative sectors.

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ONGC

Found Guilty

Report reveals blunders

THE past has a strange way of catching up with the present. Take the case of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), the country's premier producer and explorer of oil and natural gas. For nearly five years now, suspicion had been growing that the commission had flogged many of its wells in the Bombay High offshore area to raise output in the short run at the expense of the long-term potential of the reservoirs.

Now, with a six-member official committee led by A.B. Dasgupta, former chairman of Oil India Ltd, pronouncing the commission guilty, there's no fig leaf left. And last month, ONGC's own expert team concurred with the indictment.

To make amends for past mistakes, ONGC experts suggest production from 90 wells should be reduced by at least 1.5 million tonnes per annum over the next three years to ensure there is no more damage. An indicator that the lesson has been learnt comes from the Gandhar oilfields in Gujarat where the ONGC has brought down the level of production by 0.25 million tonnes this year to "avoid repeating the mistakes made in Bombay High".

Coming right in the midst of a severe oil crunch, it means that ONGC's failure will cost the country dear: to import 4.5 million tonnes over the next three years the country will, on a conservative basis, have to pay over Rs 1,000 crore.

ONGC sources admit that it will consider itself lucky if it can meet its eighth plan (1990-95) production target of 183 million tonnes. According to the Dasgupta Committee, even though production was levelling off, ONGC continued to extract oil at the same high rate from its wells in the region by "deviating" from reservoir management norms.

Bombay High; (left) Wahi: under attack

WARNING SIGNALS

- 1985-86: ONGC's Institute of Reservoir Studies first raises doubts about flogging of wells. Officials who prepared the report were hounded out.
- Warning repeated by French firm CFP, which collaborated with ONGC.
- April '90: Government appoints Dasgupta Committee.
- World Bank later says that if production from damaged wells continues, 150 million tonnes of recoverable reserves may be permanently lost.

The warning signals which began flashing in the mid-'80s had all been ignored (*see box*). However, it was only last year that the V.P. Singh government took notice and appointed the Dasgupta Committee. Its main conclusion: annual oil production should be reduced by 2.68 million tonnes over the next two to three years to restore reservoir health.

The ONGC has endorsed most of the committee's recommendations, but feels restorative action can be taken with production cuts of around 1.5 million tonnes a year. The commission's view is that though it is okay to overwork wells for short stretches—say, about five months—the three-year flogging during former chairman S.P. Wahi's tenure was on the high side.

When contacted by INDIA TODAY, Wahi justified the rate of production from Bombay High, asserting that this was well within the established norms. While complimenting Dasgupta for presenting a "balanced and mature" report, he suggested by implication that it is always possible to be wise by hindsight. And said there were conflicting opinions about how best a reservoir should be exploited. Wahi cited a report prepared by an American oil company which suggested ONGC had been "somewhat conservative" in exploiting Bombay High oil.

Wahi also denied that there were no checks on ONGC's powers during his tenure saying there were several checks, including the Chairman's Advisory Council on Exploration Strategy (CACES) which comprises experts from within and outside the Government. But a former CACES member refuted Wahi's view, stating: "CACES was not designed for this purpose." He also claimed that none of the critical reports were presented to the council.

If Wahi cannot be absolved of the blame of flogging reservoirs, the Ministry of Petroleum does not come out clean either. It appears that successive ministry bigwigs chose to turn a blind eye to what was happening. Whatever the truth, the country is paying a stiff price. —PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA with W.P.S. SIDHU

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STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

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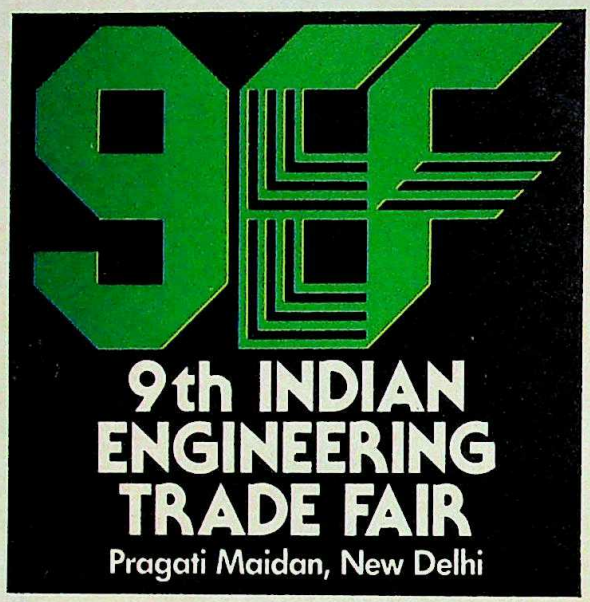

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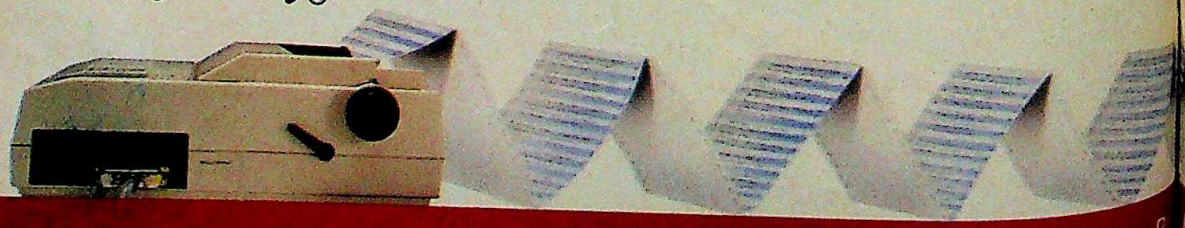

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ECHNOLOGY SHOW

from advanced countries, negotiate joint ventures and technology transfer collaboration agreements and component sourcing and ancillarisation of their products.

A special feature of the Fair is the Technology Transfer Show (TTS) where the advanced countries participate. This year 14 countries are participating. Since 1985,it was felt that a special focus be given to one country to project its capabilities through larger participation, Conferences and Seminars, etc. The Partner Country concept started with Italy in 1985, Canada in 1987 and USA in 1989 and this year the largest ever participation is from UK as the Partner Country with 150 companies.

THE 9TH INDIAN ENGINEERING TRADE FAIR WILL BE INAUGURATED BY SHRI R VENKATARAMAN, PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON 9TH FEBRUARY, 1991

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From the perspective of trade and business, it is envisaged that this Fair will lead to an explosion of new business contacts and contracts thus steadily adding to the existing network of cooperation.

A number of delegations are coming in from International Agencies like the World Bank, UNIDO, UNDP, etc. Apart from Industry delegations from both developed and developing countries, Conferences and Seminars are being organised in cooperation with various Government Departments like DGTD, Department of Industry, Commerce and External Affairs to highlight India's technology programmes, strengthening export capabilities, improvement of quality and standards.

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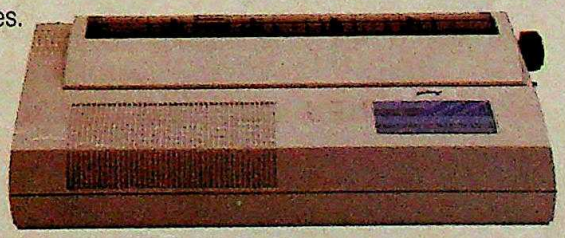

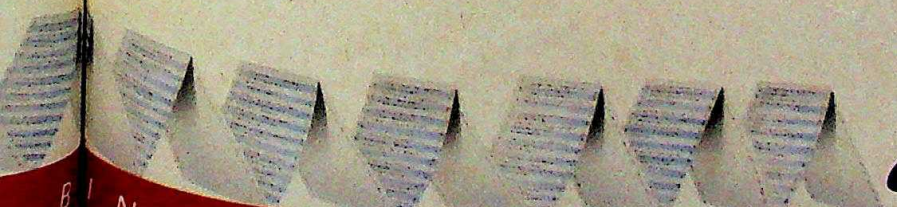

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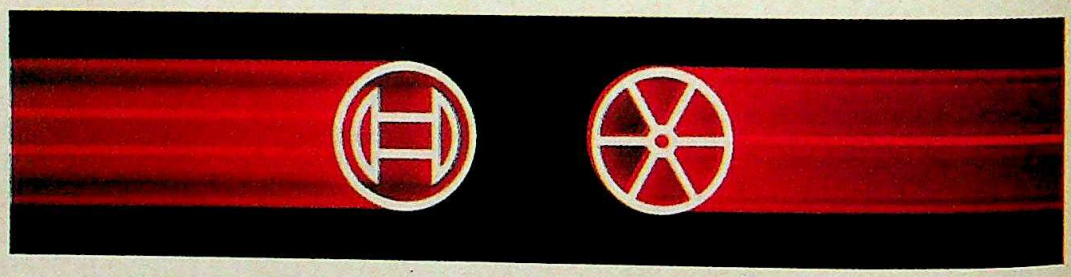

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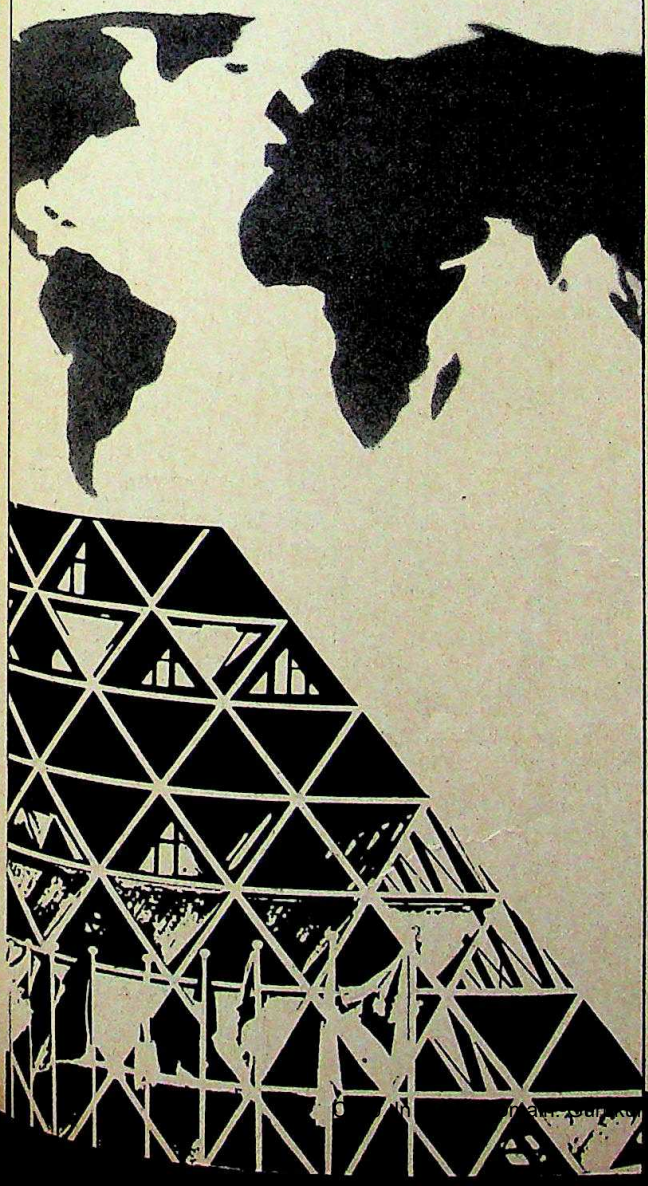

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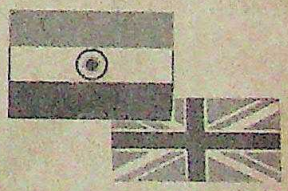

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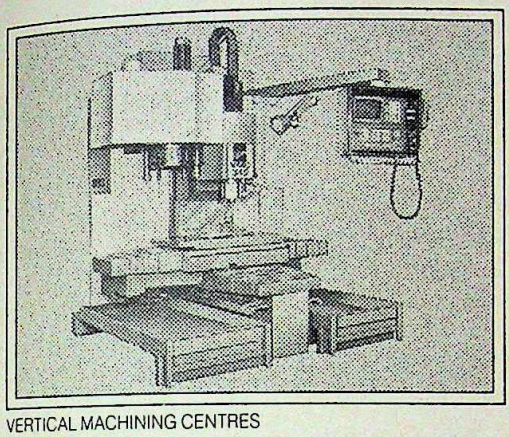
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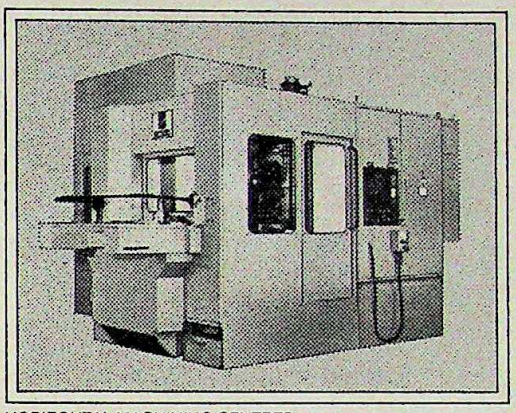
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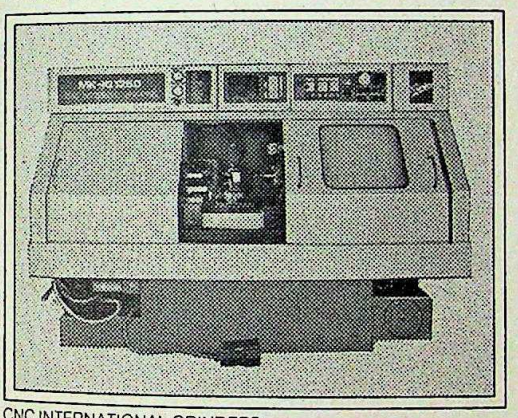
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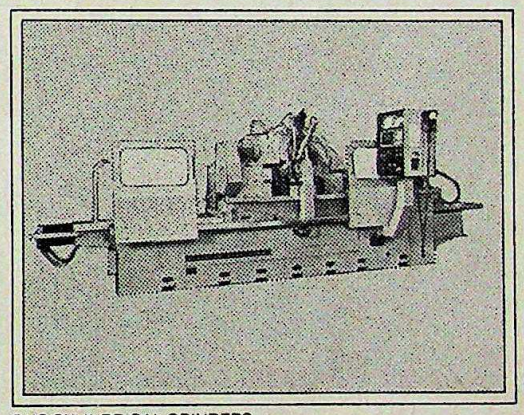
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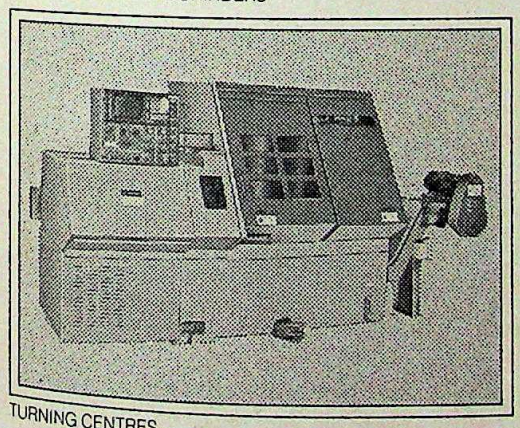
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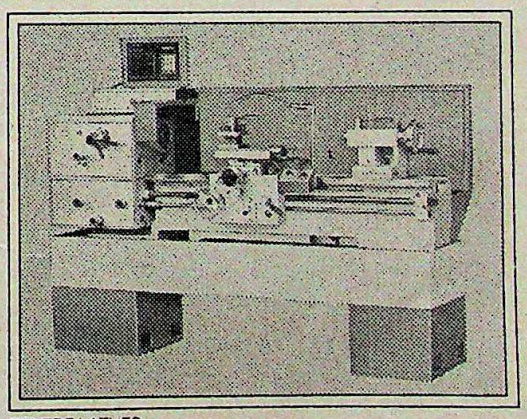
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RAILWAYS

Derailed Plans

Cash crunch stalls projects

LONG faces abound in New Delhi's Rail Bhavan these days. Reason: they're short on money. With damage to railway property due to civil strife, the fuel price increase and a shortfall in freight earnings taking their toll, the railways could be in deficit for the first time since 1984-85. Barring last-minute miracles, the projected Rs 186-crore surplus in 1990-91 will be wiped out.

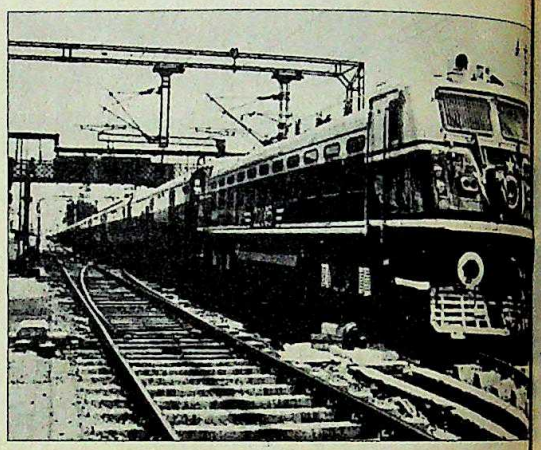
Near-term worries are also clouding the long-term outlook given the resource crunch. The Planning Commission has asked the railways to peg plan outlays in 1991-92 at Rs 5,000 crore and the overall Eighth Plan figure at Rs 30,000 crore. The railmen are pitching higher—Rs 6,500 crore for 1991-92 and Rs 36,500 crore for the five-year period—but are preparing for the worst. Futuristic plans—high-speed passenger trains and extension of computerisation in reservations—are dying a dusty death in filing cabinets.

Says a Railway Board official: "Our priority is to keep rolling stock like wagons serviceable and renew tracks already under strain." So out goes the Rs 1,100-crore freight computerisation programme. Moves for zippy passenger trains—like the Delhi-Kanpur Shatabdi Express—have been derailed by the need to generate more revenue from freight. The new gameplan calls for doubling the average speed of freight trains to 50 km an hour, effectively doubling goods capacity.

Elsewhere the axe is out. Plans for new lines, route electrification and staff house-building projects are being red-pencilled. Some uneconomic lines may be closed. Says Railway Minister Janeshwar Mishra: "We have to make sacrifices. We might have to go to the World Bank for money." He may also open up investment areas to the private sector. These include:

- Farming out repair and servicing jobs for rolling stock and assets.
- Setting up new lines.
- Reworking an old plan to let bulk users—cement companies, steel plants—buy their own wagons.
- Setting up the next wheel and axle plant in the joint sector.
- Awarding catering contracts to the unemployed.

Ideas for selling railway land or even leasing it for commercial purposes are also being bandied about. Accentuating the crunch has been the damage caused to railway property (loss: Rs 100 crore) in recent disturbances. Add sluggish freight earnings—Rs 108.85 crore below target in April-November 1990—and fatter fuel bills (Rs 150 crore more) and it's clear why red signals are flashing in Rail Bhavan. Says Bhakta Charan Das, minister of state in the Railway Ministry: "We expect the profits of the railways to be down by at least Rs 200 crore." After paying the Government its dividend, there may be no ploughback surplus left.



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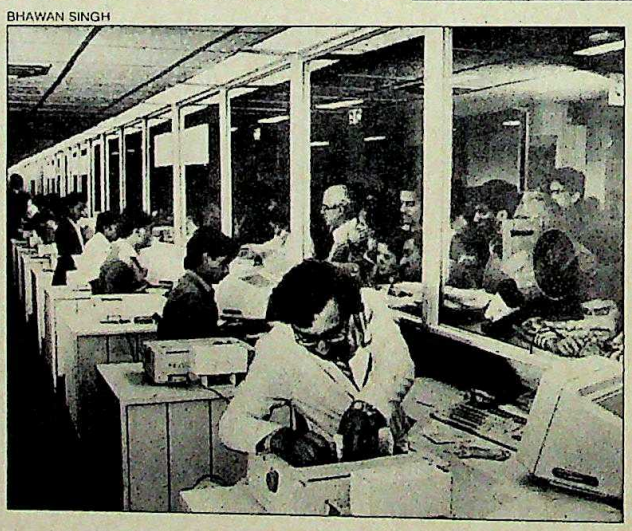

Super-fast train (top); a computerised reservation counter: projects on hold

That's bad news when budgetary support for the railways has been dwindling. From 75 per cent in the late-'70s, Central funding of the railway plan has come down to 28.4 per cent in 1990-91. As begging from the Centre didn't help, the railways have borrowed big instead (Rs 2,520 crore in 1985-90, raised through bonds floated by the Indian Railway Finance Corporation). But the costs are steep (13 per cent on bonds compared to the 6.5 per cent dividend payable on government-provided capital) and the money isn't enough.

The search for cash has seen railmen beating a path to state capitals. Says R.D. Kitson, Railway Board chairman: "We are looking for investment from state governments too." Equity investment has been garnered from Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Kerala for the Rs 1,200-crore Konkan railway project which will be run by an autonomous corporation. The railways will fork out only one-tenth of the amount. In Bombay, the municipal body and other funding agencies may pitch in with cash for the Rs 2,000-crore modernisation programme of the suburban railway system.

The megabuck projects require a new line of thinking to raise cash. Meanwhile, the more humdrum task of keeping the wheels of rolling stock moving has an equally humdrum answer: raise the rates in the budget, which is less than a month away.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

CUTBACKS

- Freight traffic will be emphasised over passenger movement
- Major computerisation plans are being shelved
- New lines, electrification, staff housing proposals face the axe
- Private sector, states to be tapped for cash

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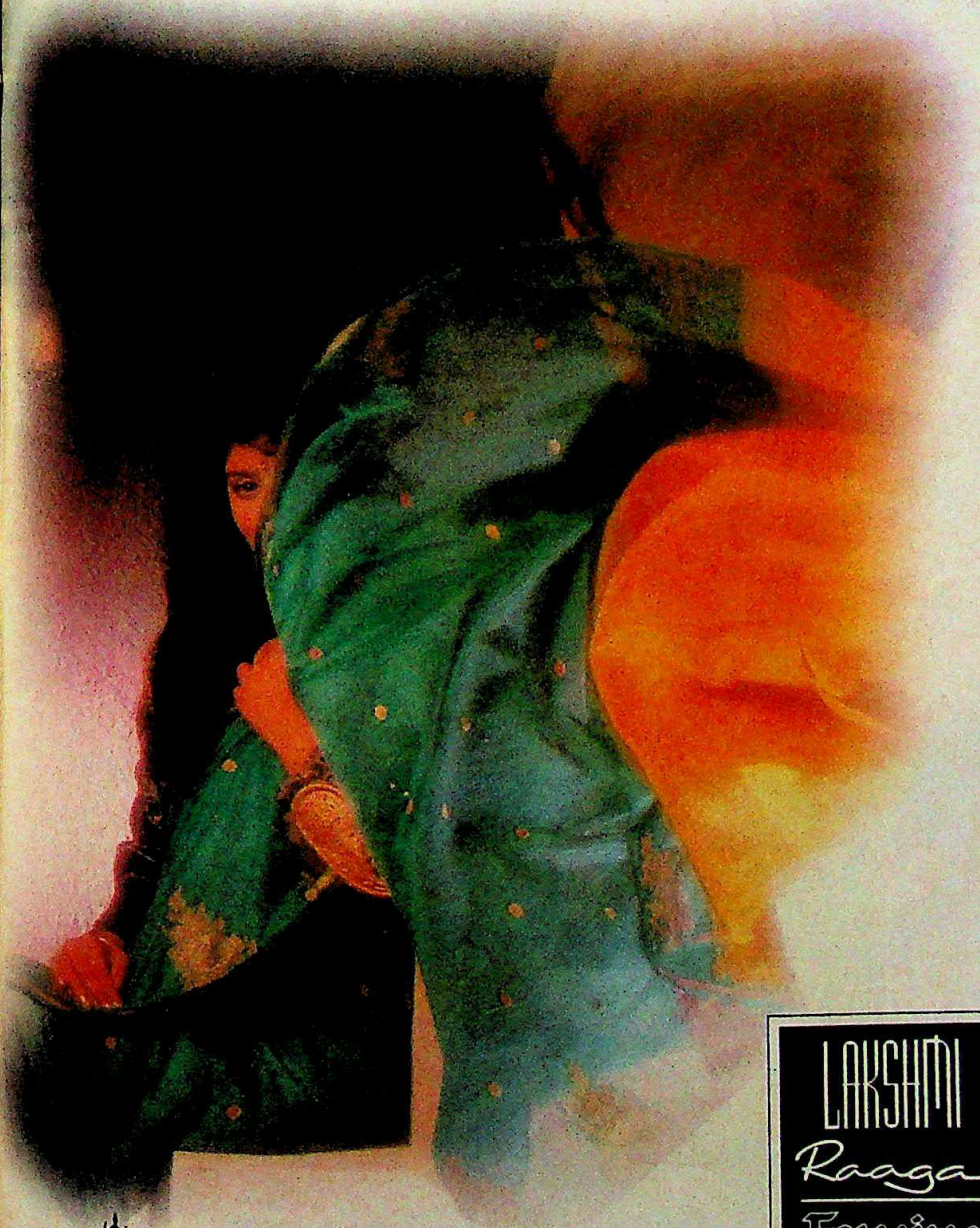

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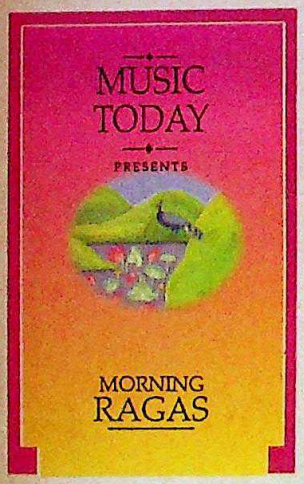

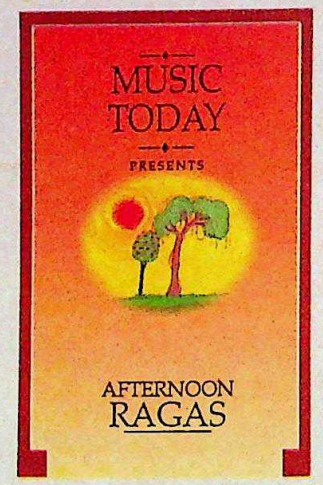

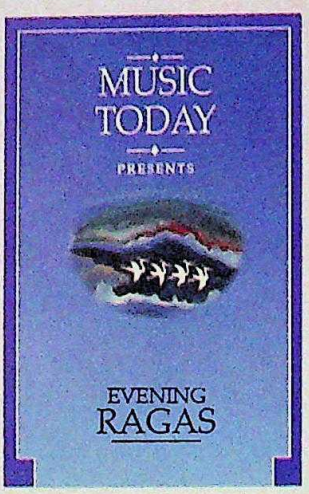

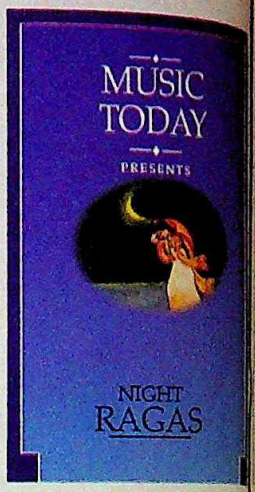

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GAUD SARANG: *Padma Talwalkar:* Vocal

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BRINDABANI SARANG: *Hariprasad Chaurasia:* Flute
MADHMAD SARANG: *Pandit Jasraj:* Vocal
DHANI: *Shahid Parvez:* Sitar

Volume 3 (Code A90007)
BHIMPALASI: *Mallikarjun Mansur:* Vocal
PATDEEP: *Shruti Sadolikar:* Vocal
MAND: *Shahid Parvez:* Sitar

Volume 4 (Code A90008)
MULTANI: *Rajan & Sajan Mishra:* Vocal
MADHUVANTI: *Hariprasad Chaurasia:* Flute
PILU: *Amjad Ali Khan:* Sarod

Volume 1 (Code A90009)
MARWA: *Pandit Jasraj:* Vocal
SHREE: *Shruti Sadolikar:* Vocal
HAMSADHWANI: *Shahid Parvez:* Sitar

Volume 2 (Code A90010)
POORIYA: *Rajan & Sajan Mishra:* Vocal
SHYAM KALYAN: *Amjad Ali Khan:* Sarod
NAND: *Mallikarjun Mansur:* Vocal

Volume 3 (Code A90011)
SHUDDH KALYAN: *Padma Talwalkar:* Vocal
MANJH KHAMMAJ: *Hariprasad Chaurasia:* Flute
DURGA: *Rajan & Sajan Mishra:* Vocal

Volume 4 (Code A90012)
YAMAN: *Shahid Parvez:* Sitar
SHANKARA: *Pandit Jasraj:* Vocal
MISHRA GHARA: *Shruti Sadolikar:* Vocal

Volume 1 (Code A90013)
SHUDDH NAT: *Mallikarjun Mansur:* Voca
KEDAR: *Padma Talwalkar:* Vocal
JHINJHOTI: *Hariprasad Chaurasia:* Flute

Volume 2 (Code A90014)
BAGESHWARI: *Pandit Jasraj:* Vocal
HAMIR: *Padma Talwalkar:* Vocal
TILAK KAMOD: *Shahid Parvez:* Sitar

Volume 3 (Code A90015)
MALKAUS: *Hariprasad Chaurasia:* Flute
MARU BIHAG: *Shruti Sadolikar:* Vocal
JAIJAIWANTI: *Rajan & Sajan Mishra:* Voca

Volume 4 (Code A90016)
NAIKI KANHRA: *Shruti Sadolikar:* Voca
DES: *Pandit Jasraj:* Vocal
DARBARI: *Amjad Ali Khan:* Sarod

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* **Cassettes will be home delivered by Registered Post/Courier.**
* Please allow a lead time of 3-4 weeks for delivery.
* For gift instructions use the attached order form. Cassettes against gift orders for 4, 8, 16 cassettes or combinations thereof will be packed and despatched in special presentation boxes. The free address book will be mailed to the donor, unless otherwise specified.
* Please make payments favouring MUSIC TODAY. and mail to MUSIC TODAY, PO Box 29, NEW DELHI -1.
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A 90002	____
A 90003	____
A 90004	____
A 90005	____
A 90006	____
A 90007	____
A 90008	____
A 90009	____
A 90010	____
A 90011	____
A 90012	____
A 90013	____
A 90014	____
A 90015	____
A 90016	____

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TOTAL NO. OF CASSETTES ORDERED _____

TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE Rs. _____

My name _____

Address _____

_____ Pin _____ Tel. _____

Gift for _____

Address _____

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MARUTI

Export Hopes

But some doubts remain

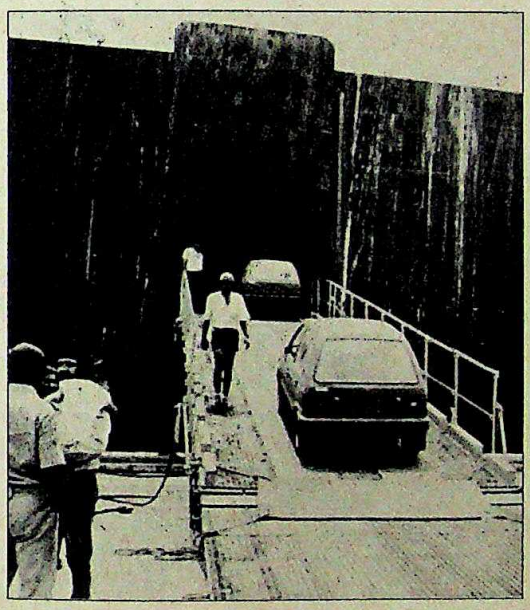
LAST month, officials of Maruti Udyog Ltd (MUL) were busy painting their company as an export tiger. The occasion: the announcement of a 10,000-car $36.5 million export order from Yugoslavia. Future excitement centres around the possibility of an annual 50,000 to 60,000 export market in Europe for small cars to be sold under the Suzuki-Maruti label from 1993-94.

But roaring forecasts need to be evaluated against the low-pitched 'meow' of achievement. True, exports have zoomed from a mere 102 cars in 1986-87, mostly to Bangladesh and Nepal, to 5,223 in 1989-90, including 2,833 sold in France. However the French thrust came up against a major road-block when its local distributor went bust. With a new collaborator not yet in sight, not even a single car has been sold in France this year. A relatively smaller order by the Italians for 2,000 cars however only serves as partial compensation for the disconnection of the French order.

The global recessionary trends may also cloud the company's hopes of becoming a net foreign exchange earner by 1991-92. An Australian distributor who had promised to buy 1,200 MUL Gypsies this year has so far taken only about 700. Others want the car but just don't have enough moolah for it: the African countries, for instance. The Gulf crisis hasn't fuelled demand for Maruti's small car yet. "Higher oil prices should logically mean more sales for small cars but that hasn't happened," says D.S. Gupta, MUL's general manager (marketing and sales). Hard currency exports from April to mid-December 1990 accounted for a mere $10.6 million while rupee exports earned Rs 2.18 crore. That means MUL still has a long way to go before it can claim to have balanced its foreign exchange account book. Between 1984 and 1990, the company spent $650 million in foreign exchange and earned less than a tenth of that back by exports.

Clearly, the pressures to increase exports are mounting. R.C. Bhargava, chairman and managing director, admits that "cars cannot have a high priority, given the foreign exchange constraints we are facing". He has thus promised the Government that the foreign exchange requirement for its 1,000 cc car will be met entirely out of export earnings. Plans to expand total car-making capacity from 1.2 lakh to 1.9 lakh annually to meet its European market commitments will also have to be financed through exports.

But Bhargava boasts of a far more farsighted reason for thinking global. "We realised that the only way we could keep the quality high was by facing competition. The domestic market could not offer us that kind of competition." Extremely brave words from a company that was widely seen as having been constantly molly-coddled at home.



Offshore bound Maruti cars

If Maruti actually does succeed in selling 60,000 cars abroad annually, it will earn about $200 million at current prices. Bhargava insists that the indigenous content of the export model, still under development in Japan, will not be less than 70 per cent. Apart from net foreign exchange gains, success here could help establish India's capability in quality engineering goods and attract more foreign investment.

The coming two or three years will conclusively demonstrate whether MUL will actually be baking the foreign exchange cake it has only been eating so far.

—ALOK TIWARI

TOURISM

Dire Straits

Bad year for industry

FOR the hotel industry in India the winter of 1990-91 is indeed proving to be bitter. Even though five-star hotels are running at 85-90 per cent occupancy, three and four-starrers are facing the grim scenario of four out of every 10 rooms staying empty. Even Goa hotels, always full in season, report a 10 per cent drop in occupancy, while Agra hotels are on the breadline with 65 per cent. Says Anil Madhok, vice-president, Oberoi Hotels: "This year has to be written off."

Five months back, prospects of a Gulf war in fact looked like sending tourists in droves to India. Says Pankaj Baliga, vice-president (sales and marketing) of the Taj Group: "We could have had a real boom this year, as tourists visiting Dubai, Turkey and Egypt would have come to India instead. But due to our internal turmoil this will be a bad year."

Higher travel costs were queering the pitch anyway, with 14 per cent increases in just two months. Thus a San Francisco-Bombay round trip costs as much as $1,660—or Rs 29,880. Says accountant Dinyar Mistry who lives in the US: "It is getting more and more expensive to come to India. Even Soviet tourists are shunning India, with the ITDC among the worst hit. Says B.K. Goswami, ITDC chairman: "The Russians are laying off India. We are concerned." The redeeming feature is that southern destinations are getting a look-in and Goswami reports a 3-5 per cent jump in ITDC hotel occupancy down south.

But overall the picture is gloomy. While nearly 1.3 million tourists arrived in India in 1989, September 1990 figures show a 5 per cent drop over 1989 at 91,000 tourists. Conservative estimates say that since October the decline has been higher, perhaps even as high as 20-25 per cent. Since a tourist spends nearly $50 a day in India on room and board and another $30 for shopping, a 20 per cent decline tots up to an annual foreign exchange revenue loss of at least Rs 500 crore. And even discounts of 40-50 per cent don't seem to be helping. That's an ominous start to 1991's Visit India Year which is also the year of the foreign exchange crunch.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

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AGARBATTIS

A Heady Scent

Industry comes of age

IT'S perhaps the easiest industry to enter. Get your raw materials—bamboo sticks, wood charcoal, sandalwood dust and jigat, a tree bark used as a binding agent—and roll them up into the final product. Wrap it in cellophane and you're in business. Ask Rukmini Vemulkar, who set up a shop at home with five workers to make agarbattis in 1955. Today her Padmini Products sells all of Rs 7 crore worth annually, and a little less than a third of it is sold abroad.

Vemulkar wasn't the first. In 1945, 14-year-old B.V. Krishnaiah Setty was churning out Rs 10,000 worth of the fragrant stuff. Now his Sarathy Perfumeries turns over Rs 1.5 crore a year in agarbattis. And there could be anything like 3,000 more Vemulkars and Settys generating business estimated at an annual Rs 120 crore, every eighth rupee of which comes from exports.

Size has brought greater sophistication with it. Thus Vemulkar has a Rs 75-lakh research and development centre that is sniffing at new fragrances to give the company a marketing edge. And the industry itself has grown out of its cottage roots to a multi-storeyed existence. B.V. Aswathiah & Bros of Bangalore, one of the oldest companies in the business, started out with 15 employees but today provides livelihood to 100, generating a Rs 5-crore turnover from four units in Karnataka. The company moved away from its modest headquarters in Bangalore to a plush multi-storeyed complex which houses its perfumery and packaging divisions.

Exports too have come a long way from 1952 when Khiram Luthria of Mysore Sugandhi Dhoop Factory (MSDF) moved to Bangalore and sent his first shipment of agarbattis to Africa. The Rs 2-crore MSDF is today a 100 per cent export company.

But mixed with this heady scent of success is the noxious vapour of declining raw material sources—jigat in particular. Says B.S. Kanthraj of B.V. Aswathiah & Bros: "Some years ago we used to get jigat at Rs 4-6 a kg from Coorg. Today we have to procure it from Kerala or Assam at more than twice the price." Reason: jigat, the bark of the *maschilus macaranthas* tree that was originally grown in abundance on the coffee estates of Coorg, is now in short supply due to the depletion of forest resources. The bark is still available, but Forest Department rules are too stringent to permit large-scale supply.

The same goes for other raw materials like bamboo and sandal dust. Prices have more than doubled in the last 10 years, and Karnataka's own resources have dwindled drastically. While jigat is available in Malaysia and Thailand, import costs are prohibitive (Rs 25 a kg), due to high import duties of 50 per cent.

The All-India Agarbatti Manufacturers' Association has been requesting successive governments in Karnataka to provide land for growing jigat, but the pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Due to shortages, Karnataka manufacturers have been forced to move out to other states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The Gulf crisis has caught the industry in a pincer attack. Since two out of every five packets of agarbattis sold goes to the Gulf, exports are under threat. Industry sources reckon that actual exports may undershoot the Rs 18-crore target by a good Rs 2 crore. Also, the Gulf war threatens to raise the cost of some of the petroleum-based aromatic chemicals which in turn will further raise the costs for agarbatti manufactures. As it is, agarbatti prices have risen by at least 30 per cent in the last two years, slowing domestic growth.

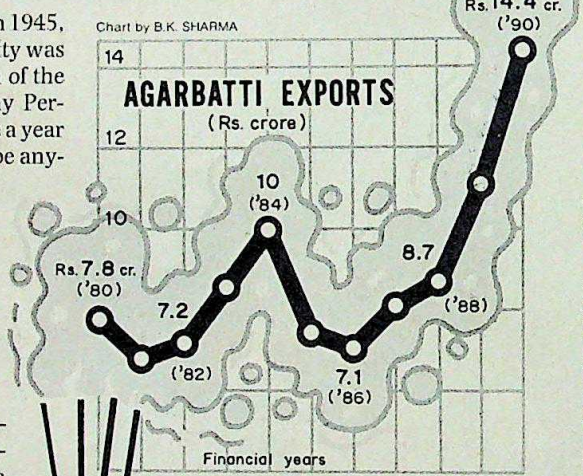
To compete with Japanese exporters who have set high international standards in packaging and marketing, Indian manufacturers too have gone in for sophisticated packaging—boxes in various colours and shapes with names as exotic as Night Queen and Pakeezah. The change isn't just cosmetic. At Padmini Products' research centre, 38-year-old Surekha Vemulkar sits amid rows of perfume bottles, Indian and foreign, testing new fragrances. Surekha, who learnt the fine art of perfumery at Rouere, France, is the only one of her kind in the agarbatti business—a qualified professional perfumer. When her tribe grows, the Indian agarbatti industry should be able to take on the world.

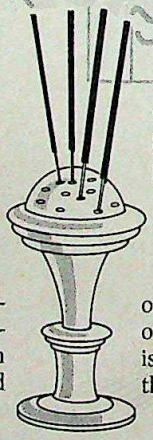
—KAVITHA SHETTY

SHYAM TEKWANI

Packing agarbatti sticks

Chart by B.K. SHARMA





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Colgate Plus. The most talented toothbrush you can ever find. Its firm inner bristles and soft outer bristles match each other note for note — one carefully cleaning your teeth, the other gently massaging your gums. Its diamond head glides surefootedly across your teeth, effectively cleaning every corner. Its slim neck provides truly admirable singing support by allowing for manoeuvrability in your mouth. Colgate Plus. In an international blister packaging. Available in adult and junior sizes. Colgate Plus. Makes your teeth dance to its song.

CHORUS LINE.

Colgate PLUS THE PERFECTLY TUNED TOOTHBRUSH.

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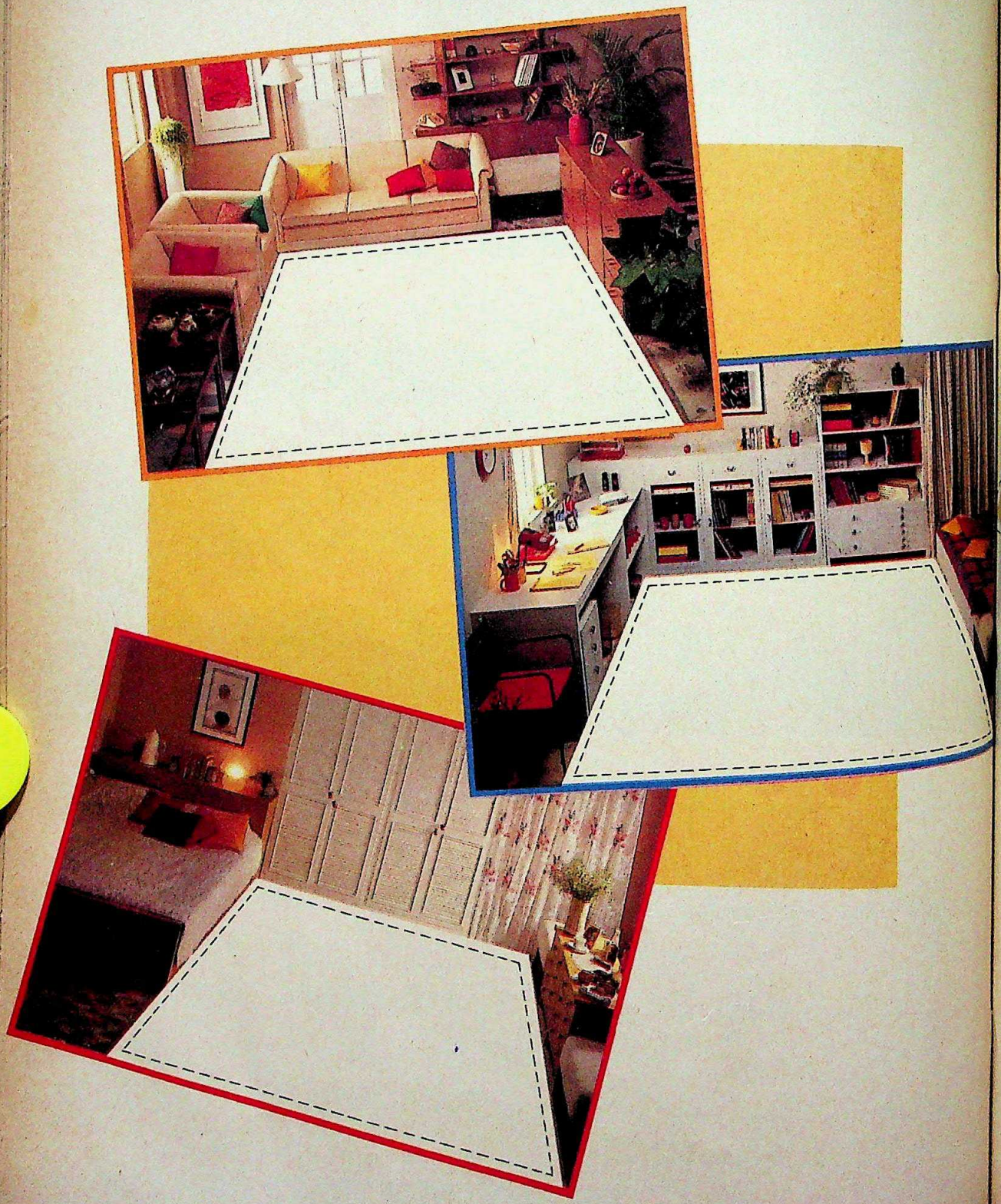
TODAY, GIVE EACH OF THESE ROOMS A MATCHING MARBLE FLOOR.



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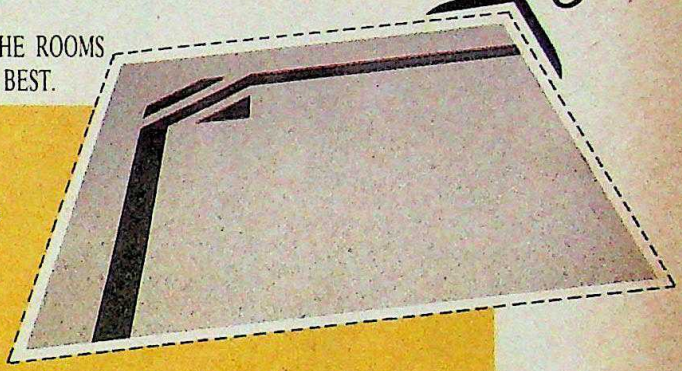
BY TOMORROW, DO THE SAME IN YOUR HOME.

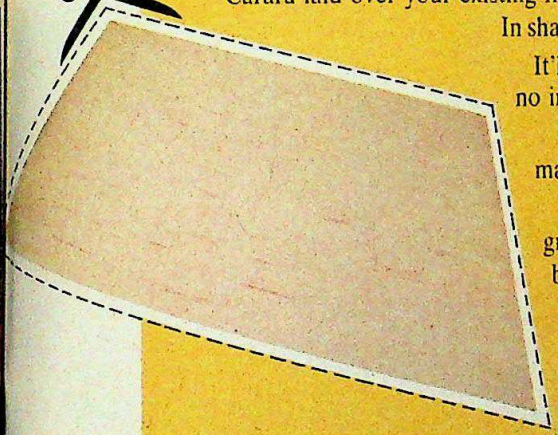
CUT OUT THESE THREE FLOORS, MATCH THEM TO THE ROOMS ON THE LEFT, AND STICK THEM WHERE THEY LOOK BEST.



Yes, laying down a marble floor in your home is as simple as sticking on the floors in this ad!

Thanks to Carara.

It's so simple! All you have to do is get Carara laid over your existing floor.



In shades that match your walls and furnishings.

It'll take just a few hours. No mess, no inconvenience.

Blended Marble. Carara is made of blended marble, a unique floor covering material.

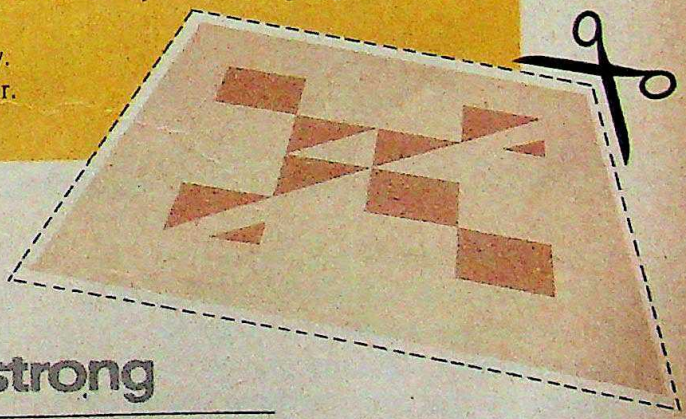
80% of each Carara tile is made up of fine granulated marble, held together with imported binders.

Colours to match your decor. You get two exquisite designs and a range of original shades to choose from. And the smooth toughness of marble: Carara is scratch-resistant.

Armstrong expertise. Carara is made with the technical expertise of Armstrong, the American floorings giant. So it lasts for years and years.

What's more, giving a room a Carara floor costs you less than giving it a new coat of paint!

Hurry, call any of our offices today. And stick on a brand new marble floor.



Armstrong

CARARA

BLENDED MARBLE TILES

Instant floor decor

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THE MARKETS

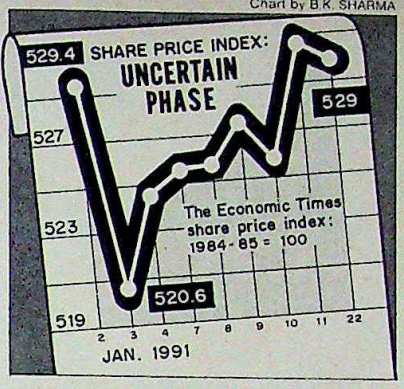
War Jitters

Exchanges remain closed

GOLD and US dollars are about as safe a bet as you can get during times of war. With the conflagration in the Gulf setting off great uncertainties on the economic front, the dollar has firmed up smartly against almost all the other major world currencies, as has the price of gold in the international bullion markets. But where does that leave the world's stock-markets? Reactions on most bourses were bullish after the price of oil came down sharply on reports of the initial successes of the US-led allied forces in Iraq and occupied Kuwait; but a lull followed when hopes of a short and contained aggression were shattered.

Back home, with the country's premier stock-market remaining closed soon after war broke out, it was not easy to judge which way shares would have moved. Despite the payment crisis on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)—with several brokerage firms having defaulted on their contracts—it appeared (before the market closed on January 12) that the worst was over with the return of the institutional investors. Share prices moved up in a narrow band on January 11, and the BSE 30-share Sensitive Index, after rallying to 1,034.30, closed lower at 1,017.72. The exchange authorities said the closure of the market was prompted by the need to reduce the "disruptive" impact of the Gulf situation, but most marketmen also saw it as a tactical move to help those brokers who were finding it difficult to meet their payment obligations. Dealings on the kerb too were thin, with Reliance quoting just above Rs 100 and Tata Steel just under Rs 150.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



While the Gulf factor will be an important determinant of market movements over the next few weeks, most marketmen feel that the trading sentiment will depend more on the economic and political situation at home. Analysts feel that the markets have already discounted the consequences of a long Gulf conflict, and institutional investors may be asked to play a more supportive role than they have been doing recently.

Meanwhile, the mutual funds have been cheering investors in other ways. Canbank Mutual Fund has announced bonus scrips on two of its schemes, Canshare and Cangrowth, apart from recommending final dividends for the year ended December 31, 1990. In what will be the second time that Canshare has announced a gift of scrips, two bonus shares will be given for every five shares held; and barely one year after it was floated, Cangrowth has announced a bonus of one share for every four held.

For far-sighted and optimistic punters, there is great potential once the war is over for exports—mostly of building materials and manpower—will receive a boost.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1991 HIGH	1991 LOW	CLOSE 22.1.91	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	136.00	109.00	136.00	16.00 +
Associated Cement	1500.00	1350.00	1485.00	35.00 +
Asian Paints	232.50	215.00	227.50	nil
Atlas Copco	46.00	42.00	44.00	nil
Bajaj Auto	600.00	555.00	580.00	10.00 +
Baroda Rayon	455.00	400.00	450.00	10.00 +
Ballarpur	248.00	220.00	247.00	5.00 +
Birla Jute	180.00	168.00	179.00	6.00 +
Blow Plast	75.00	40.00	60.00	5.00 +
Bombay Dyeing	167.50	150.00	160.00	nil
Britannia Ind.	120.00	113.00	117.00	3.00 –
Brooke Bond	126.00	116.00	126.00	4.00 +
Cadbury	143.75	132.50	141.25	5.00 +
Castrol India	196.25	180.00	192.50	2.50 +
Century Textiles	3800.00	3625.00	3775.00	50.00 +
Colgate Palmolive	268.75	250.00	265.00	7.50 +
DCM	162.00	139.00	155.00	nil
Dunlop	52.50	49.50	52.00	0.50 +
E.I. Hotels	50.00	45.00	50.00	nil
Escorts	145.00	127.00	145.00	3.00 +
Finolex Cables	205.00	170.00	185.00	nil
Garware Nylon	40.00	35.00	38.00	0.50 +
G.E. Shipping	29.00	25.00	28.00	1.00 +
G.S.F.C.	210.00	150.00	165.00	5.00 +
Grasim Ind.	187.50	172.50	185.00	2.50 +
Guj. Ambuja Cement	108.75	90.00	107.25	3.50 +
Hind. Aluminium	232.50	200.00	228.75	5.00 +
Hind. Ciba	775.00	650.00	760.00	10.00 +
Hindustan Lever	146.00	140.00	145.00	nil
Hindustan Motors	23.50	21.25	22.00	nil
Hoechst	2700.00	2500.00	2700.00	50.00 +
Indian Organic	37.50	32.00	37.50	2.50 +
Indian Rayon	123.00	110.00	122.50	nil
Ingersoll-Rand	276.00	240.00	276.00	7.50 +
ITC	116.00	105.00	109.00	2.00 –
J.K. Synthetics	36.25	29.00	35.50	3.00 + *
Kinetic Engineering	170.00	150.00	167.50	2.50 +
Kirloskar Cummins	108.75	95.00	107.50	3.75 +
KSB Pumps	190.00	160.00	170.00	10.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	102.50	92.00	100.00	2.50 +
Lipton	70.00	57.50	69.00	4.00 +
LML Ltd.	37.00	31.25	35.00	4.00 +
LMW	2725.00	2380.00	2725.00	260.00 +
Madura Coats	210.00	193.00	205.00	12.00 +
M&M	70.00	60.00	67.50	nil
Mastershares	23.25	20.00	22.50	0.50 +
Motor Industries	740.00	675.00	720.00	20.00 +
MRF	330.00	300.00	300.00	20.00 –
Mukand Ltd.	170.00	155.00	167.50	3.75 +
National Organic	1000.00	925.00	975.00	nil
Nestle India	125.00	111.25	123.00	4.25 +
Nirlon	20.00	18.00	19.50	1.00 +
Orkay Silk Mills	23.00	17.50	21.50	nil
Peico Electronics	60.00	53.00	56.00	1.00 +
Premier Auto	50.00	30.00	39.00	1.00 +
Raymond	126.25	110.00	126.25	1.25 +
Reckitt & Colman	216.00	205.00	216.00	14.00 –
Reliance Industries	115.00	95.00	108.00	3.00 +
Siemens India	125.00	112.50	122.50	2.50 –
Shaw Wallace	93.00	77.00	88.00	7.50 +
Shriram Fibres	36.00	33.00	35.00	2.00 +
SKF Bearings	1900.00	1650.00	1900.00	100.00 +
SPIC	41.00	33.00	41.00	3.00 +
Tata Steel	155.00	130.00	146.25	1.25 +
Telco	182.50	167.50	170.00	6.25 –
Titan Watches	67.50	58.00	65.00	2.50 +
Vam Organic	115.00	102.50	111.25	3.75 +
Videocon Int.	250.00	205.00	235.00	15.00 +
Voltas	106.25	92.50	100.00	3.75 +
Wimco	22.00	19.00	20.00	1.50 –

* Ex dividend

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	14.4526	14.3006
Austria	Shilling	100	175.4240	173.7612
Bahrain	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Bangladesh	Taka	100	53.0371	52.2274
Canada	Dollar	1	15.9637	15.8033
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.2239	3.1912
Egypt	Pound	1	6.5638	6.4549
France	Franc	1	3.7037	3.6101
Germany	Deutschmark	1	12.5786	12.2699
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.3750	2.3518
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9742	0.9598
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1.6542	1.6324
Japan	Yen	100	14.2450	13.8889
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.8157	0.7970
Kuwait	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.8157	6.7476
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.3128	1.2864
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6461	0.6376
Netherlands	Guilder	1	11.0113	10.8988
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8414	0.8221
Singapore	Dollar	1	10.6766	10.5677
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1982	0.1952
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4616	0.4560
Sweden	Kroner	1	3.3172	3.2835
Switzerland	Franc	1	14.7902	14.6362
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.0974	0.0940
Thailand	Baht	100	74.6369	72.7453
UK	Pound	1	36.0946	35.8295
USA	Dollar	1	18.5099	18.3318
UAE	Dirham	1	N/A	N/A
USSR	Rouble	1	22.7870	22.7847

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 22.1.91.

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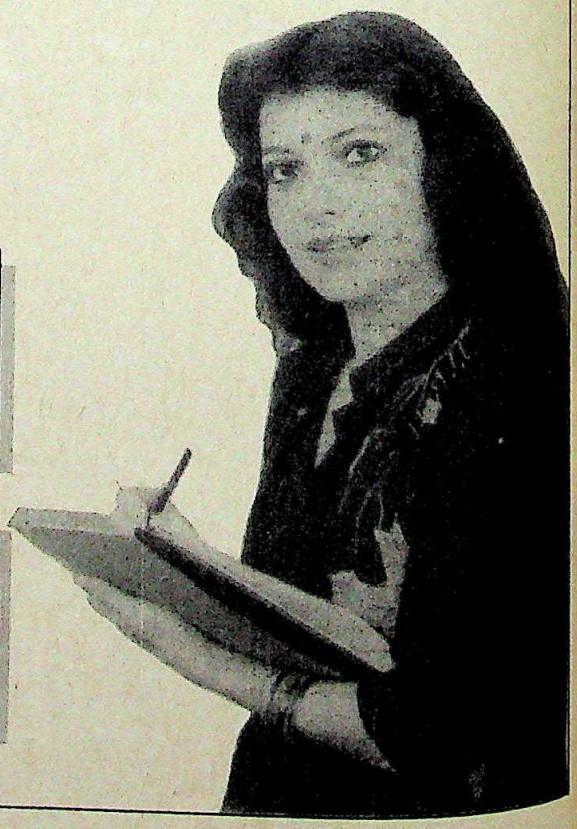
"Annual growth touches new high"

Turnover up by 255%

Net Profits up by 232%

Turnover Rs.408.14 crores	Net Profit Rs.13.24 crores
Total Assets Rs.372.56 crores	Net Worth Rs.54.73 crores



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NIPPON DENRO ISPAT

continues its accelerated pace of growth

STINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE PROJECT

GEST IN INDIA
would be the largest and the first MEGAMOD Sponge Iron t in India.

EST GENERATION TECHNOLOGY
e technology is based on the MIDREX direct reduction process ich is a proven energy efficient gas based process. In view of single module operation and updated technology, the cost production per tonne is expected to be lower as compared to er Sponge Iron plants in India.

EXIBILITY TO USE 100% LUMP ORE
can directly use 100% Iron Ore lumps as raw material and has the facilities to use any mix of Iron Ore Pellets and Iron Ore mps.

RATEGIC LOCATION
e plant will be located at District Raigad in Maharashtra in se proximity to the major users of Sponge Iron. It also offers her locational advantages – proximity to sea port; proximity to pipeline; low cost of laying pipes; adequate supply of power; ured availability of gas; well connected with sea, rail and road nsport and good infrastructure facilities with private jetty and lway siding.

OMOTERS' EXPERIENCE
e promoters have experience in successfully operating a MIDREX gas based Sponge Iron plant with a capacity of 840,000 in Trinidad and Tobago (West Indies).

REIGN EXCHANGE SAVINGS
rated capacity and based on current prices, the project will e foreign exchange to the tune of Rs.250 crores per annum.

Public Issue of 1,02,85,714 12.5% Secured Fully Convertible Debentures of Rs.140 each for cash at par aggregating Rs.144 crores

DEBENTURE HIGHLIGHTS

- ☐ **Face Value :** Rs.140
- ☐ **Interest :** 12.5% per annum payable half yearly
- ☐ **Attractive Conversion :** Part A of Rs.50 into 2 Equity Shares of Rs.10 each at a premium of Rs.15 per share at the end of nine months from the date of allotment.

  Part B of Rs.90 into such number of equity shares of Rs.10 each at a premium to be decided by CCI between 24 to 30 months from the date of allotment.
- ☐ **Listing :** Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi & Ahmedabad Stock Exchanges.

In addition, 80,00,000 14% Secured Redeemable Non-Convertible Debentures of Rs.100 each are being offered at par.

e Company does not receive the minimum subscription of 90% of the issue amount, the entire subscription will be refunded to the applicants within 90 days from the ure of this issue. If there is delay in refund of such amount by more than 10 days the Company will pay interest at the rate of 15% per annum for the delayed od.

An opportunity to be a part of this future

THE ISPAT GROWTH BONDS

Share our experience worldwide

NIPPON DENRO ISPAT LIMITED
'Park Plaza', 71 Park Street, Calcutta 700 016

Issue opens 11 February 1991

Lead Managers to the Issue

SBI Capital Markets Limited
202 Maker Towers 'E'
Cuffe Parade
Bombay 400 005

The Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India Limited
Merchant Banking Division
163 Backbay Reclamation
Bombay 400 020

Canbank Financial Services Ltd
(A wholly owned subsidiary of Canara Bank)
2/1 Russel Street
Calcutta 700 071

J.M. Financial & Investment Consultancy Services Ltd
141 Maker Chambers III
Nariman Point
Bombay 400 021

PRESSMAN

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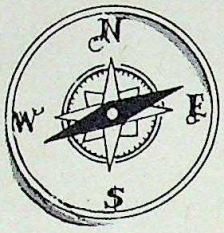
SATYA GROUP

satya group

East or West North or South...



...either way we'll take you to the Top.

"You Assure Growth & Results. We Guarantee Complete Autonomy for Performance..."

We have ambitious Growth and Diversification plans which would substantially multiply our present turnover of 100 crores.

We are a Group of five manufacturing companies specialising in areas of non ferrous metals, steel, pharmaceuticals, engineering thermoplastics, speciality papers, paper mill and jute mill accessories. We also have a Services Company specialising in giving services to our group companies in human resource development, financial analysis and planning, project identification and implementation etc. and trading activities.

We invite professionals for the following positions:

CHIEF EXECUTIVES

(Code : RT/39/90)

To independently manage their respective units, meet the objectives efficiently and in time.

Ideally, the candidate must be in his 40's with hands-on-experience of 10-15 years in a similar/senior position in the industrial engineering sector with at least 5 years as a profit centre head, plus a strong track record in marketing.

The position reports to the Managing Director and provides a conducive environment for self-actualization.

GENERAL MANAGER (Works)

(Code : RT/40/90)

To assume total responsibilities for plant installations, operations, maintenance, quality control, optimum capacity utilisation, factory administration etc.

The candidates would be engineering graduates preferably with MBA degree having at least 10 years experience in an industrial engineering company of repute.

GENERAL MANAGER (International Trading)

(Code : RT/41/90)

The incumbent would establish and develop the new International Trading Division at New Delhi to reach the envisaged turnover of 50 crores in 3 years. He would ideally possess in-depth knowledge of import/export policies and procedures, and have extensive contacts. Fifteen years' experience is desirable.

The remuneration package will be commensurate with qualifications and experience comparable with the best in the industry.

Interested candidates may apply in strict confidence within 10 days with their resume and a recent photograph, superscribing the envelope with the relevant position Code to :

PAMWI

SATYA SONS SERVICES LIMITED
S.C.O. 55, SECTOR 26-D, Madhya Marg,
CHANDIGARH - 160 019.

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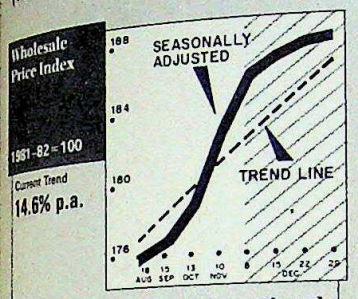
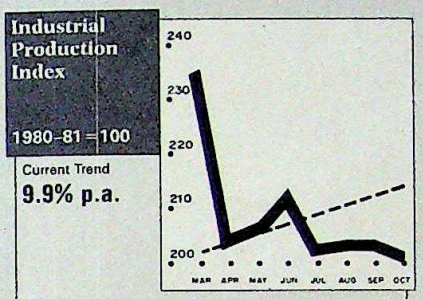
Last fortnight, the economy saw the dismal failure of monetary policy. Despite the high rate of growth of money supply, overall industrial growth stagnated with no positive effects on growth, the expansionary monetary policy ended up intensifying the inflation crisis.

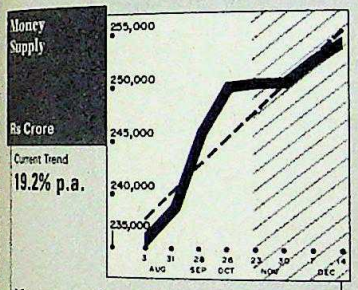
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



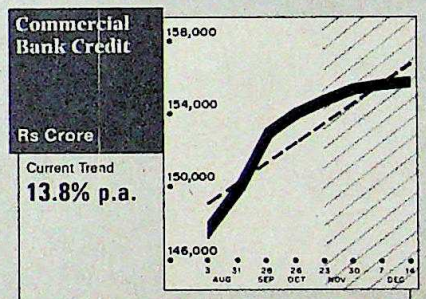
Inflation continues unabated. Government policies are not even making a dent on the problem.



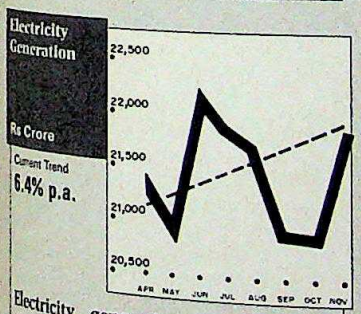
Industrial production has been falling steadily. This is bound to have adverse effects on the growth of the economy.



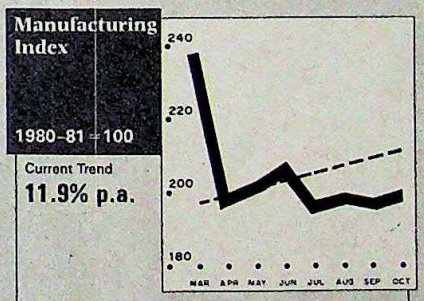
Money supply continues to expand, further worsening the already existing inflationary situation crises.



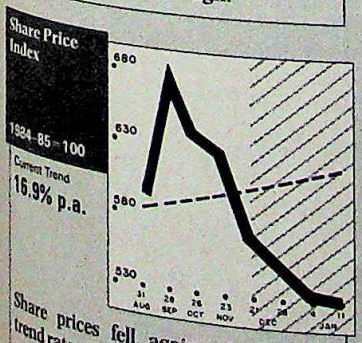
Commercial bank credit grew last fortnight. However, no impact was registered on industrial growth.



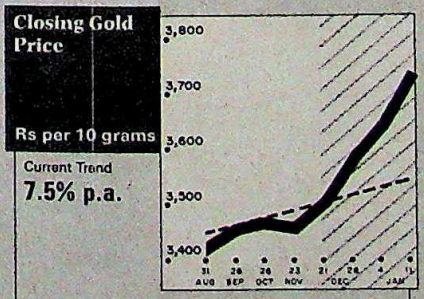
Electricity generation was on the increase. Industry should benefit greatly as a result of this new high.



Production in the manufacturing sector picked up slightly. This should help to hold up overall industrial growth.



Share prices fell again—the current trend rate of growth is similar to what it was before the stock-market boom.



Gold prices registered a major jump—if inflation continues at its current rate, we should expect even greater increases.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of December 1990

	% Growth
Oranges	11.84
Tobacco Raw	9.34
Tapioca	5.49
Barley	5.05
Gingelly Seed	4.98
Onions	4.69
Jowar	4.52
Maize	4.50
Gingelly Oil	4.25
Solvent Extracted Oil	4.20
Wheat	4.05
Cashew-Nut	3.96
Groundnut Oil	3.94
Zinc	3.93
Jute Textile Machinery	3.67
Betel-Nut	2.96
Cables & Wires	2.81
Power-Driven Pumps	2.55
Board	2.53
Copper & Alloys	2.27
Milk	2.23
Linseed	2.20
Atta	2.17
Linseed Oil	2.10
Ghee	2.01
Dry Cells	1.99
Bananas	1.88
Mining Machinery	1.83
Cotton Seeds	1.61
Electrical Motors	1.61
Bajra	1.54
Meat	1.47
Aluminium	1.41
Rape & Mustard Seeds	1.32
Groundnut Oilcake	1.07
Cotton Raw	1.06
Dairy Products	1.04
Cotton Yarn	0.90
Hides Raw	0.83
Tea	0.77
Fish	0.74
Maida	0.68
Mustard Oil	0.59
Plywood	0.58
Cement	0.51
Rice	0.45
Trucks	0.43

Of the 134 series considered, 113 of them with a total weight of 66.975 had a positive rate of growth and 21 of them with a total weight of 17.877 had a negative rate of growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1990	1989
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, November	18250	17060
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, November	789.5	797.1
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, November	3850	3570
Fertiliser		
Thousand Tonnes, November	757.8	725.9
Electricity		
Million kWh, November	21582	20853

Compiled by THE POLICY GROUP

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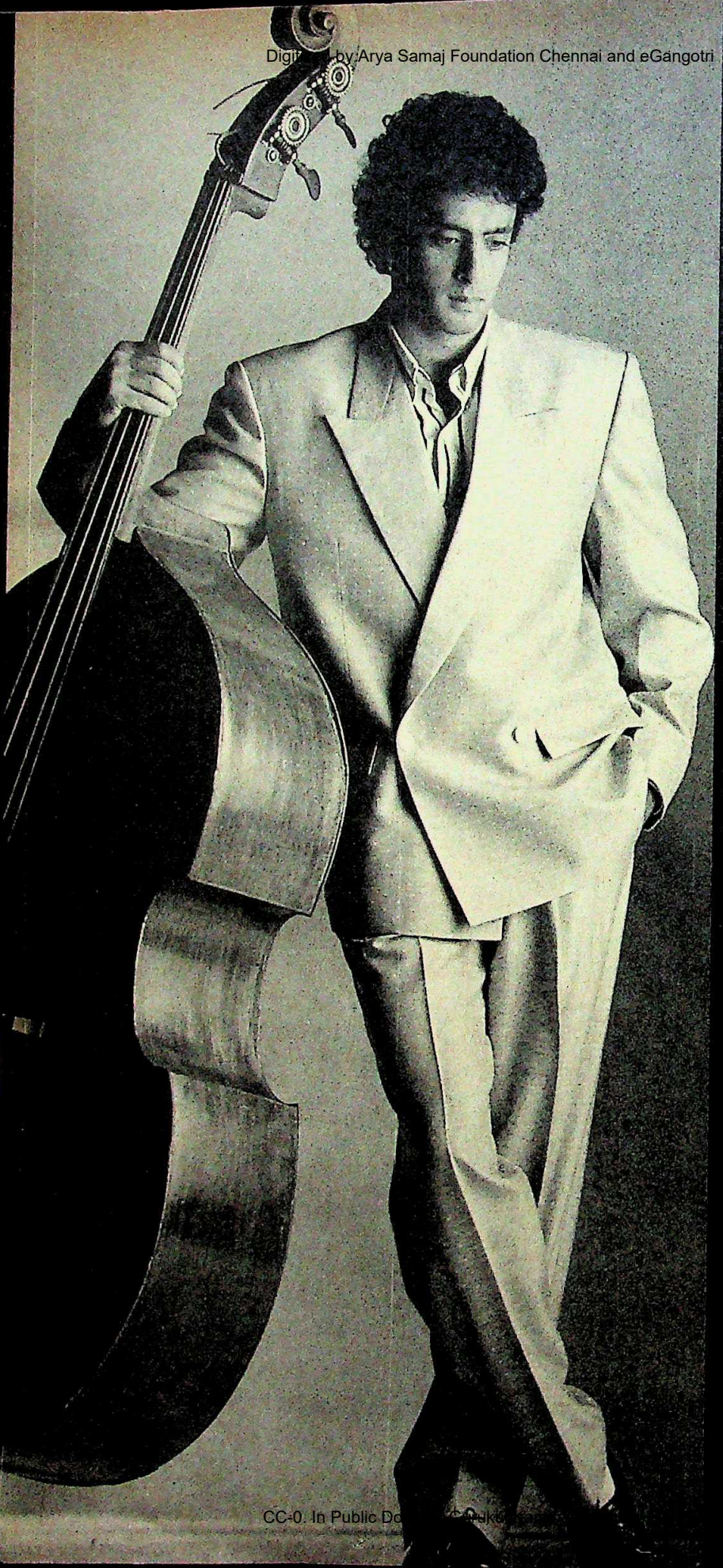

OCM
Designer Collection

FABRIC
FOR
MEN
AND
FOR
BOLD
WOMEN

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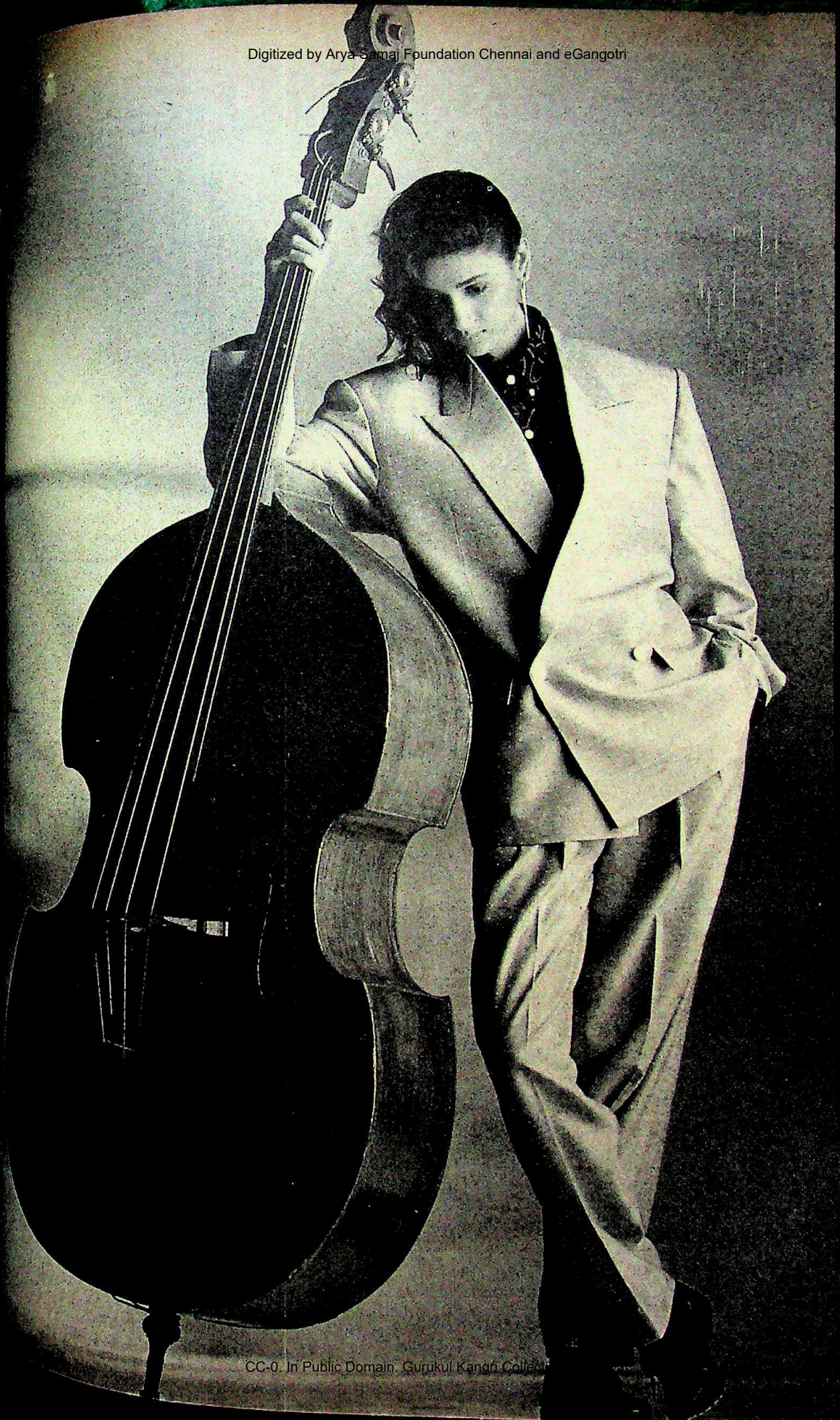

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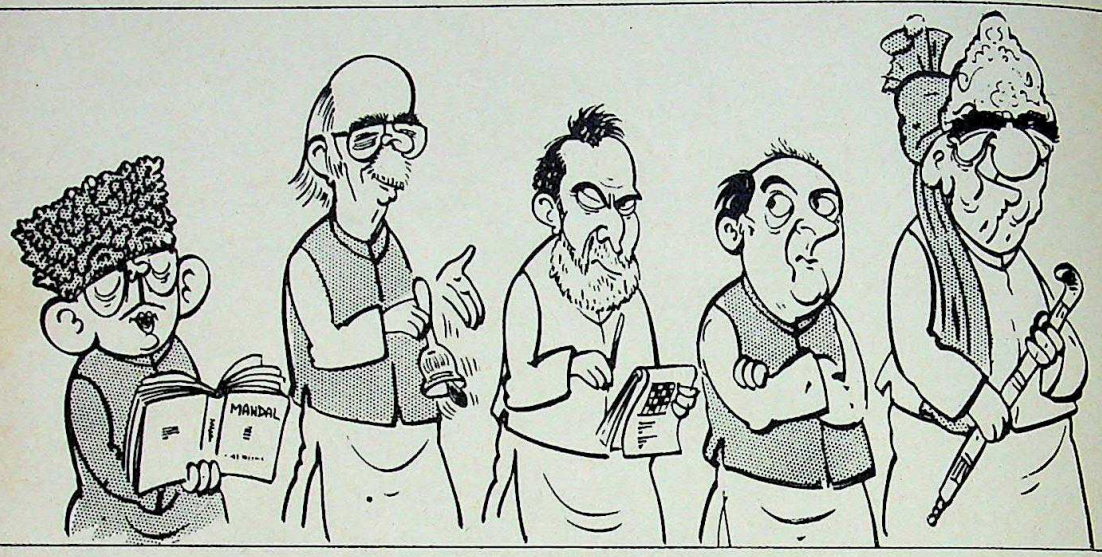
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES ANNUAL CARTOON CONTEST 1991



THEME

** Cartoon*

Politics Today

** Caricature*

Prominent Indian/Foreign Personalities.

PRIZES

(in each category)

1. FIRST : Rs. 15,000
2. SECOND : Rs. 10,000
3. THIRD : Rs. 5,000

There will be 10 consolation prizes of Rs. 500 each.

DEADLINE

Sunday, March 10, 1991

RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. The contest is open to amateur, non-professional Indian cartoonists above the age of 18 years. (Those who earn a living from cartooning are not eligible. Please attach a signed declaration that you are not a professional cartoonist.)
2. All works must be original and unpublished.
3. SIZE: Cartoon — 25x30 cm. Caricature — 30x45 cm. You can draw either in a horizontal or in a vertical format as suits you. Size must be followed strictly.
4. Each entrant should indicate name, age, address, occupation, telephone number (if any) on the reverse side, in BLOCK LETTERS.
5. Each contestant may take part in either category or both, but submit no more than THREE entries in EACH category. All caricatures should be identified on the reverse side.
6. All prize-winning entries will become the property of The Hindustan Times. The Hindustan Times reserves the right to reproduce the award-winning cartoons in newspapers and magazines published by the HT Group. No requests for returning the drawings, prize-winning, or otherwise, will be entertained.
7. All entries should be on white drawing paper and in black, waterproof ink. All drawings should be neat and clean. No drawings in colour will qualify.
8. The decision of the jury will be final and irrevocable.
9. The result of the contest will be published in The Hindustan Times dated April 14, 1991 (Dak editions: April 15)

JURY: *CHAIRMAN—Shri M F Husain*

MEMBERS—Sh. Khushwant Singh, Sh. Kapil Dev, Sh. Abu Abraham, Smt. Dimple Kapadia and Sh. Sudhir Tailang

A big opportunity once again. The Hindustan Times invites all amateur cartoonists to display their talent to ridicule and to make the whole world laugh.

You can submit your entries at the reception of our office or mail the entries to

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES CARTOON CONTEST 1991, 18-20 KASTURBA GANDHI MARG, NEW DELHI-110 001

NO FUNNY BUSINESS! NO LAUGHING MATTER.

F-N/XIII-1065

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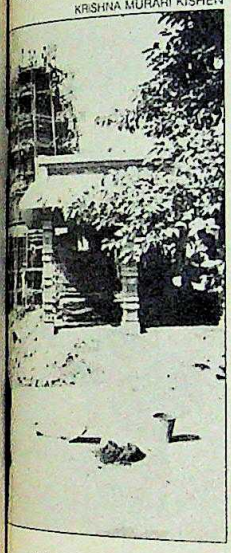
UTTAR PRADESH

Bounty for Ballia

● It is the kind of political manna Ballia has long awaited: Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's decision to organise the first national convention of the Janata Dal(S) in his constituency. This has led to fervent activity in the area. The Uttar Pradesh and Central governments have showered the district with hi-tech facilities. A 1,000-line electronic telephone exchange will replace the old-fashioned 700-line crossbar exchange. Minister of State for Communications Sanjay Singh has also ordered 12 more air-conditioners to be installed at the exchange, in addition to the six already there. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, who visited Ballia for 15 minutes on January 18, further sanctioned Rs 14 crore to improve the power supply. The prime minister wanted to draw the country's and party leaders' attention to the poverty in Ballia. However, the local people say, to highlight this poverty, they are burdened by many VIP visits. No dissension is heard because the Congress(I) wants to please Chandra Shekhar, and other opposition parties are non-existent in the area.

KRISHNA MURARI KISHEN



Ballia: VIP invasion

TAMIL NADU

Dislodging Moves

T. RAMAMOORTHY

Rajiv at Kancheepuram: praying for peace

● Last fortnight, Rajiv Gandhi was in Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, to pray for "world peace" and appealed to the three shankaracharyas of Kanchi Mutt to prevail upon world leaders to avert war. The prayer went unheeded. Rajiv then did a bit of political praying and called on Jayalalitha, AIADMK supremo and Congress(I) ally.

Meanwhile, the Congress(I)-AIADMK strategy to unnerve Karunanidhi carried on in full force. Said Rajiv: "There are very strong grounds for dismissing the Tamil Nadu Government." Interestingly, Rajiv, who was to inaugurate the swanky new Congress(I) auditorium, "Kamaraj Memorial", postponed it, apparently because the TNCC(I) thought it could be done in better style, only after the DMK Government was dismissed.

MADHYA PRADESH

Defiant Celebrations

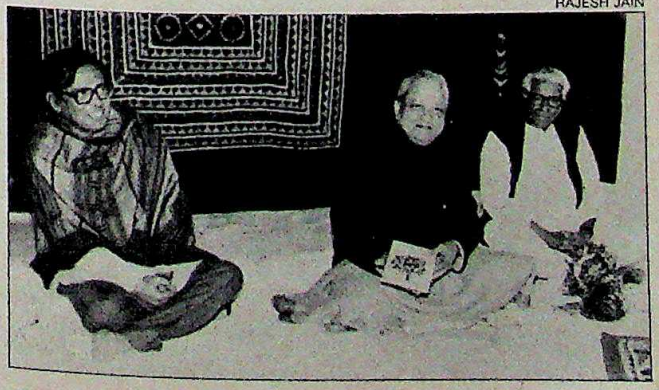
● The admirers of Ashok Bajpeyi, who was ejected as secretary of Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal from where he presided as a czar of culture for 18 years, organised a function in Bhopal last fortnight on his 50th birthday.

Among those who performed at the bash were Kumar Gandharva, Aktarul Iman, Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar, Madhvi Mudgal and Budhaditya Mukherjee.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa, who is revamping Bharat Bhavan, has re-opened a four-year-old criminal case involving Bajpeyi's relatives.

Kumar Gandharva releasing Bajpeyi's poems

RAJESH JAIN



ORISSA

Secret Rendezvous

● They moved freely amidst the milling crowd on the sea beach of Puri, hiding their faces behind dark glasses. The Minister of State for Communication Sanjay Singh arrived in the coastal town to attend a conference of All India Telecom Employees Union and who should he bring along but Ameeta Modi, her three-year-old daughter and parents. Not even the district administration was informed of the minister's extended stay. To ensure absolute secrecy, Singh and Amita even travelled in separate cars.

Sanjay (top); and Ameeta

When confronted by newsmen, Singh, in his usual unfazed style, retorted: "It's my personal business." He seemed unshaken by the tongues wagging in the conservative town because of their presence in Konark—taking dips in the sea and lounging leisurely in the hotel lobby. Singh and Ameeta also visited the famous Jagannath Temple.

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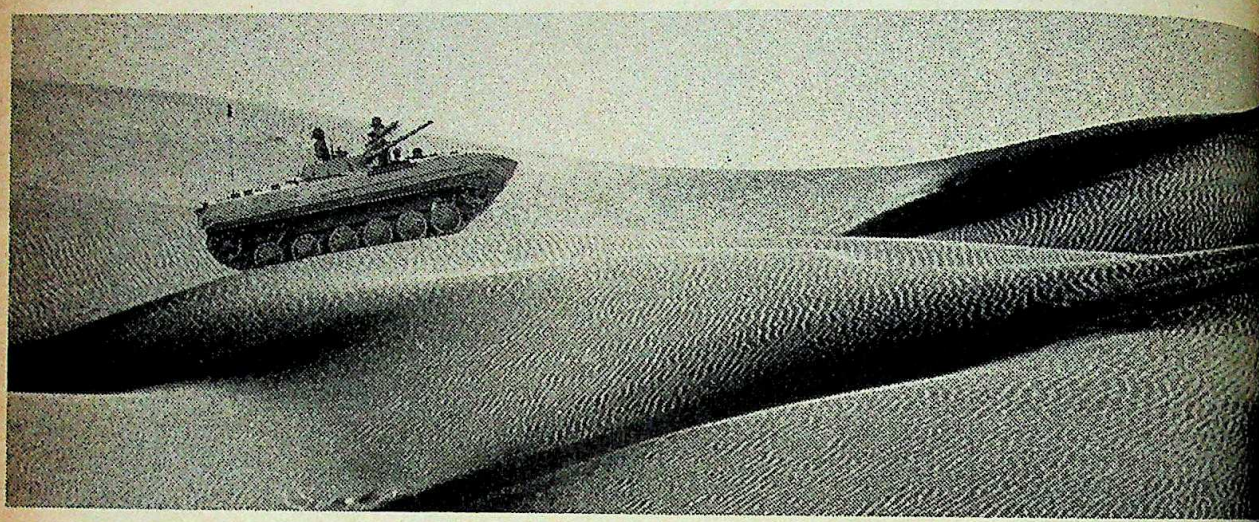
DESERT AND MOUNTAIN, SNOW AND INHOSPITABLE COASTLINE. DEFENDING INDIA'S BORDERS IS A DEMANDING TASK THAT CALLS FOR EXTREME ALERTNESS.



PROVIDING THE VITAL COMMUNICATION LINKS THAT KEEP INDIA'S DEFENCE FORCES EVER PREPARED, IS TATA TELECOM.

In the sensitive Himalayan region... In the torrid desert borders of Western India... And in many other vital defence bases all over the country, Tata Telecom is there.

Deeply engaged in its role of providing vital communications support to the defence forces in crucial day to day operations.

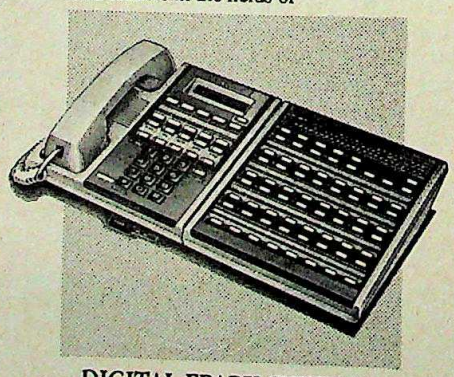
This is not all.

Elsewhere, Tata Telecom is upgrading communication systems for core sectors like banking, hotels, railways, business and industry.

This is how Tata Telecom is revolutionising communication and making life convenient. Everywhere.

Indeed the commitment of Tata Telecom to the nation's communications needs is total. Reflected in the quality of products and the customer support it offers.

Digital EPABXs manufactured with technical assistance from Oki of Japan, the world leaders in the fields of telecommunication and information processing.



Tata Telecom has its sights set on tomorrow. And is geared to harness the communication technologies of the future.

A future that's going to be exciting. Because Tata Telecom is committed to take you there.

Tata Telecom.

A commitment to serve the India of tomorrow.

For more information on Tata Telecom Digital EPABX Systems, contact:

Tata Telecom Ltd.

E-1/1, G.I.D.C. Electronics Estate, Sector 28, Gandhinagar 382 028. Tel: 21773, 21774.
Tlx: 0120-3231 TTLG IN.

DIGITAL EPABX SYSTEMS
FROM

TATA TELECOM

TECHNOLOGY FOR THE FUTURE WORLD

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Appealing Prince

● When he came on a sudden visit to strife-torn Hyderabad and appealed for communal harmony at a Congress(I) rally last month, Prince Mukarram Jah, successor to the title of the late Nizam of Hyderabad, set off speculation that he is poised to enter politics.

Rumour had it that the real motive behind Jah's visit—he has lived in Australia for the last 19 years—was to sort out his debt problems. Apparently, he tried to influence Congress(I) leaders to

Jah at Congress(I) rally: no ambitions

get clearance exempting 250 acres of his Chiraan palace land in Hyderabad from the purview of the Urban Land Ceiling Act to raise about Rs 30 crore to bale him out.

Jah made his sense of desperation clear when he said: "The last 10 years have been a nightmare. My goal is to live decently." No wonder the homely prince with no political axe to grind was a big draw in the old city of Hyderabad, and did not face the hostility received by Rajiv Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah when they visited the city after Jah's departure. But Jah ruled out a political role, saying: "We were not brought up to it. In Hyderabad the ruling family was a one-man show. My grandfather ran the whole thing." If only monarchy was back.

MAHARASHTRA

Gruesome Gang Wars

INDIAN EXPRESS

Shoot-out at a Byculla saloon: mafia mayhem

● The new phase of gang wars between Dubai-based Dawood Ibrahim's men and rival underworld chiefs claimed their first innocent victim last month. Goatherd Gulab Patil died in a Mafia-style attack in Bombay.

Ibrahim's first commando-style raid on rival dons was done in *filmi* style on a stronghold of Arun Gawli. Twenty men in red jackets stormed the complex. Fortunately no one was killed. Soon after, Ibrahim's men struck in an area controlled by the deceased Rama Naik's gang, killing the goatherd and injuring eight others. Four hoods were nabbed by the police from an Ibrahim gang hideout in Chembur. The police believe that the commando operations were a reaction to the killing of a Ibrahim gangster by Gawli's men. There is a lull at the moment. But only till the others retaliate.

KARNATAKA

Fanning Controversy

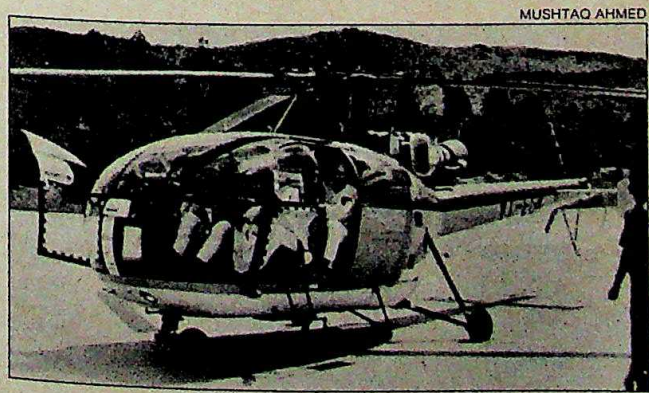
● The winds of political change in Karnataka are buffeting an unlikely object—the government's Chetak helicopter.

Bought in 1979, the machine gained notoriety with its frequent use by Gundu Rao. In 1983, R.K. Hegde vowed not to use it, but began sneaking trips. S.R. Bommai also used it.

After assuming office in 1989, Veerendra Patil decided to sell the bird. But before he could do so, he was replaced by S. Bangarappa who has decided to keep it especially since the elections could come any time.

Rajiv in the government helicopter: controversial chopper

MUSHTAQ AHMED



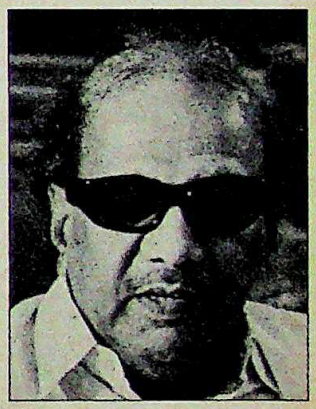
TAMIL NADU

A Fair Exchange

● On the eve of the assembly session nothing could have pleased Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi more than the news that Karnataka had agreed to release water from the Cauvery. The dispute between the two states over the river waters is over three decades old.

This year the farmers in Thanjavur need water to save the standing crop. Earlier appeals by Karunanidhi to S. Bangarappa and the Cauvery Water Tribunal

Karunanidhi; Bangarappa: agreement at last



constituted to resolve the dispute were in vain.

Last fortnight Bangarappa heeded the suggestion of the prime minister to release water on the condition that Karunanidhi promise to barter electricity in return. Meanwhile, the prime minister seems keen to settle the dispute: he has called both Bangarappa and Karunanidhi for conciliatory talks.

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Don't get stuck

To respond to tomorrow and to safeguard your investment, PCL Hallmark II suggests you invest in 'Open Computing'. Not just closed boxes.

The danger with closed boxes is that they have obsolescence built into them. What's even worse, you get trapped.

Every time you need an addition or change you've got to return to the same vendor. He gets into R & D and at best offers only patchwork solutions. No questioning costs, no arguing time-frames, please. You're at his mercy.

Company needs grow. More terminals required without sacrificing response time. You're stuck. So is your vendor. Because available intelligent communication cards will not match. Back to patchwork. And note, when you want high throughputs, faster data access, intelligent I/O controllers, disk controllers, even patchwork may not work.

Suppose, you need a certain RDBMS software. Prevailing systems support only two or three at best. If the one you need doesn't happen to coincide, you're stuck. Again. You're back on your knees for porting. And there's no guarantee you'll come up trumps.

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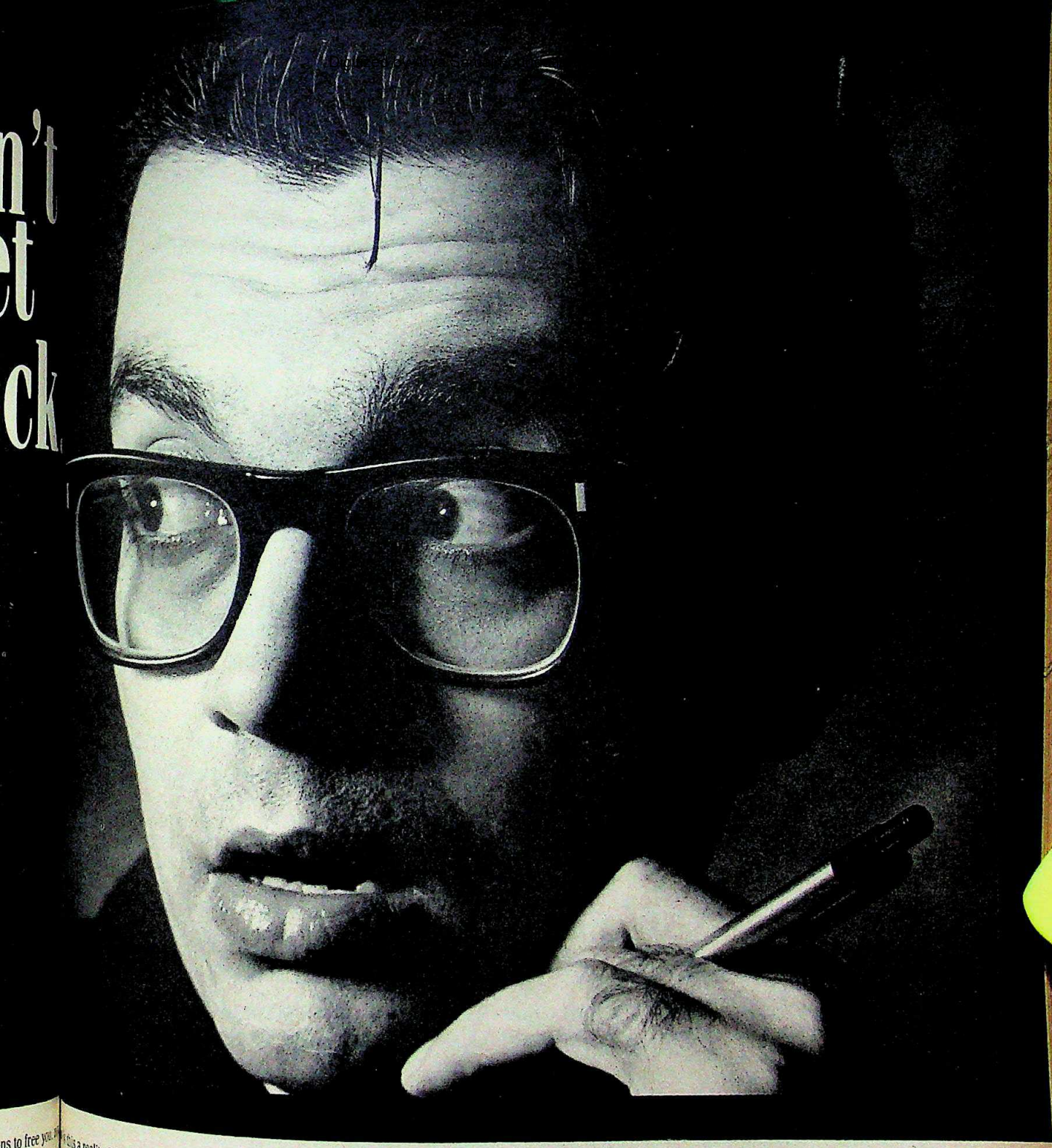

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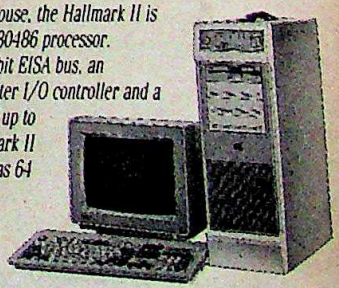

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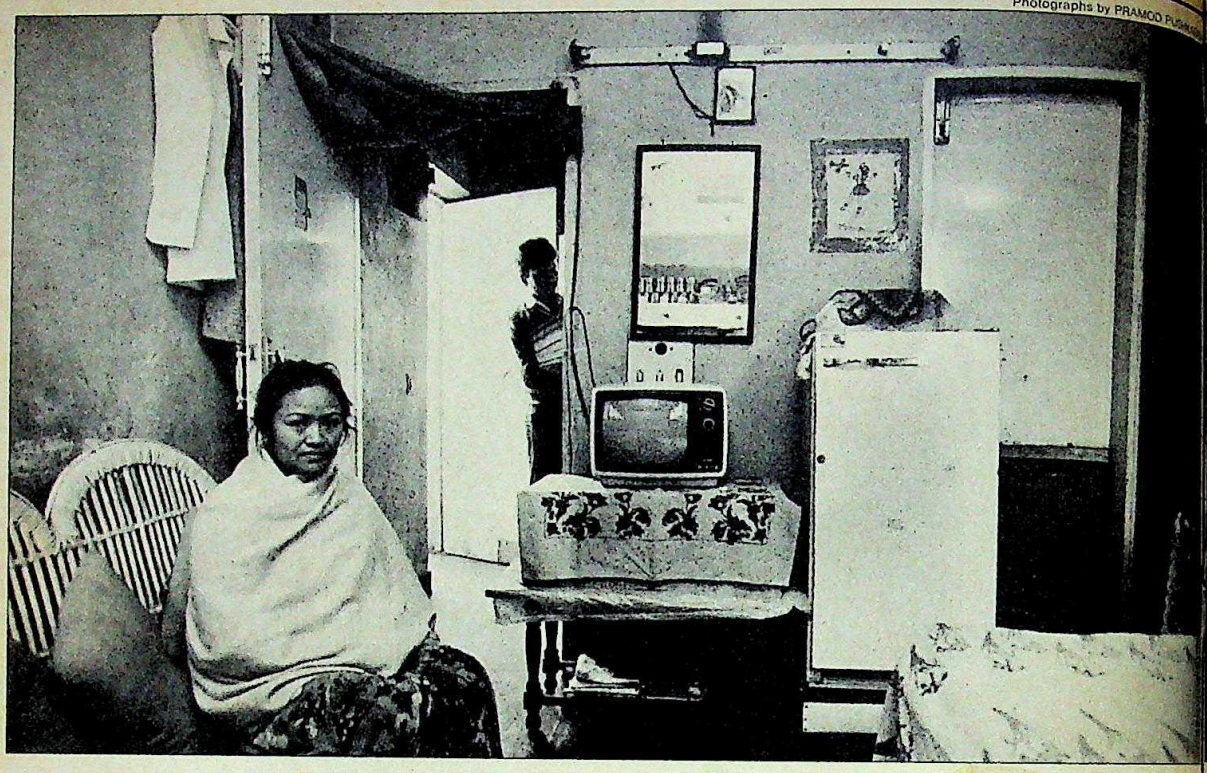

Susheela, a hired help, in her well furnished quarter in Delhi

Servants have moved up in life and insist on enjoying all the trappings of modern living such as TVs, VCRs, refrigerators and even coolers.

DOMESTIC SERVANTS

Changing Status

They are no longer willing to be cheated like inconsequential minions. They are united, yearn for the high life and work on their terms.

By MADHU JAIN

I show them a new movie on the VCR once a week. I give them non-vegetarian khaana. I don't check on the sugar.
—Meera Chatterjee, a New Delhi housewife.

We want to be treated like human beings. There are still buildings which allow dogs in the lifts but not servants.
—Ganpat Pardare, founder of the Gharelu Kamgar Sangh (GKS), Bombay.

IT'S not quite eyeball to eyeball—at least not yet. But a war of nerves is on between masters and servants. And increasingly, it's advantage servant. It's now the providers' market in the big cities as demand exceeds supply. Placement agencies, a new phenomenon in the big cities, have long waiting lists for domestic help. Regina Pacis, a missionary order which provides maids in Bombay has a minimum waiting period of six months. K. Raghupathi, who set up a maids service home in Madras in 1985, has over 2,500 hopefuls registered in search of a servant.

Just 10 years ago, a word to a friend and by the next morning two or three people would materialise at the doorstep. Today people beg, borrow and steal—even from their best friend—and employers will go to any length to keep a servant: teach them driving, get them jobs in private companies or in government offices, many make them feel a part of the family.

Today, a raised eyebrow or a hard voice and he's gone. And, he wants the right price too. Five years ago he was willing to work—round the clock—for about Rs 200 or Rs 300 a month.

Now, even a debutant domestic is reluctant to begin at anything less than Rs 500 with food, shelter and clothing. A cook is worth at least Rs 800—the *dhobi* food cook that is. The *anda-maida* cook—as those conversant with western cuisine are called—can get as much as Rs 2,000. Trained ayahs, the most

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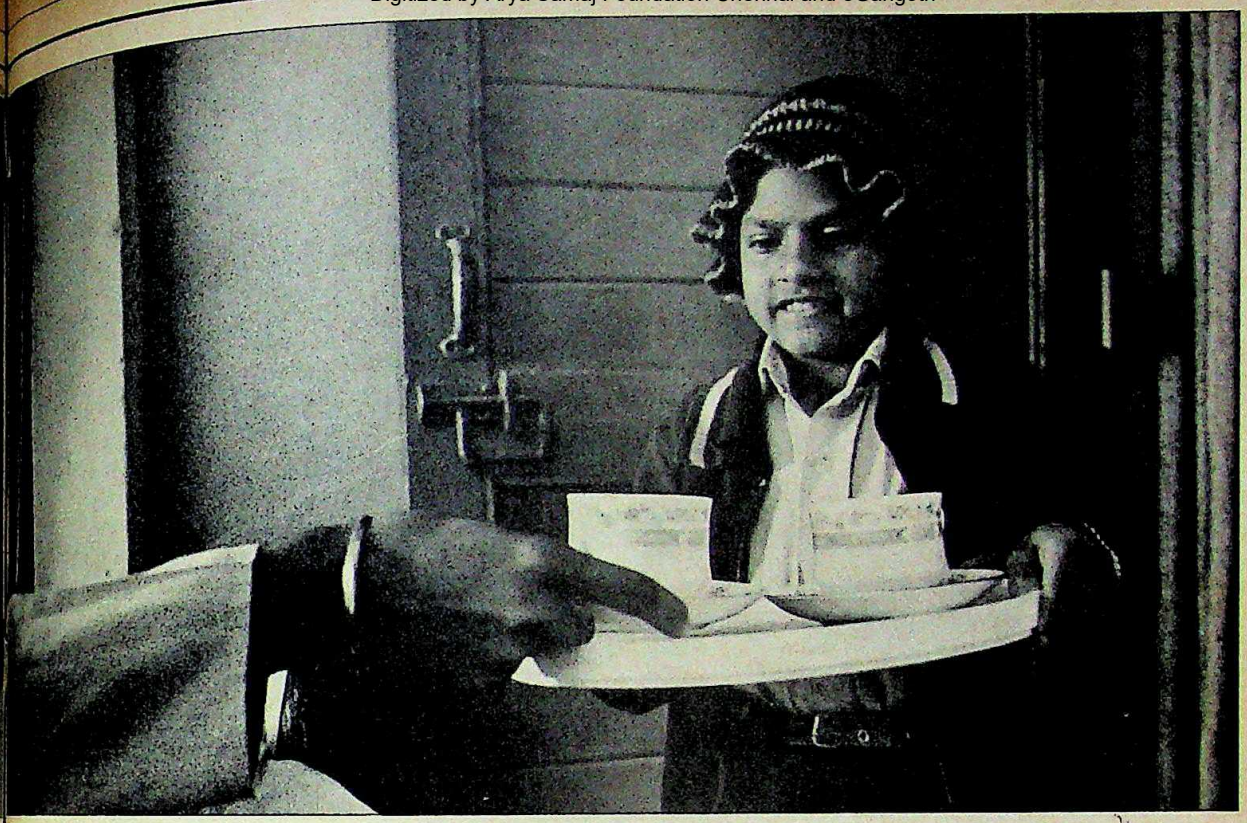

Chottu Ram, a young boy employed as a domestic help in north Delhi

As the servant market shrivels and getting maids becomes almost impossible, people employ* mundus*—sometimes boys as young as seven years.

ought after these days because of the owing number of working mothers, n turn their noses up at anything less an Rs 700. For exportable servants e Gulf, Europe or the US) three times e amount is demanded.

Where have all the servants gone? e old class of servants has moved up in e and is being absorbed in other profes- ns. With job opportunities opening , that sense of destiny—call it fatal- m—that the son of a servant could ly be a servant has all but disap- ared. The big change really came hen the feudal rural patterns gave way urbanisation and industrialisation. wasn't exactly slavery but your ther had served him, you serve him d your son will also serve him," says nohar Shyam Joshi, author of popu- r tele-soap operas *Buniyaad* and *Hum re*," he adds.

A moral economy is at work here: e master provides the protection— n today in parts of eastern Uttar adesh and Madhya Pradesh the heduled Castes do not have any hous- g sites and are totally dependent on the big landlords. Wages do not matter: the servant gets food, shelter and protection, often the master marries off the daughters and pays a stipend for the son's education. But the flip side of this security is: absolute loyalty.

NO longer. Now servants are more aware of their rights—an awareness created by the information explosion and the workings of democracy. From wages of patronage to the negotiable salaries of industry. The real change has come with a sense of dignity: the servant wants to be a master of his own time and not at the beck and call of his employer. He would rather work in a factory or as a driver even if it means getting less in real terms. For instance, Govardhan, 34, a domestic help turned-driver earns Rs 1,150 a month. But that's all he gets. As a servant he got Rs 650, a quarter, food and hand-me-down clothes—which totted up to over Rs 2,000. "My uncle who works in a factory told me that I would not get anywhere in life if I remained a servant," says Govardhan.

Factories draw in many domestic servants. Some women who used to work in Calcutta homes now prefer to stay in their villages and commute to factories in the city. An increasing number of guest-houses and *halwai* shops in the cities provide other alternatives for the domestic servant. Lately, men and women from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh are flocking to the cities for jobs. Some of the agricultural labour from Bihar is being diverted from the strife-torn Punjab to Delhi and other northern cities. Tribal Christian women from the Chhota Nagpur region represent the new wave of migrant domestic workers. And domestic help from Nepal is also increasingly visible.

Also, the traditional catchment areas for domestic help are drying up. In the north, development—especially road construction by the Himachal Pradesh Government for instance—and free education have plugged much of the exodus to the plains of those in search of domestic jobs. Not only has massive road building spurred development, but the Public Works Department (PWD) has also become a major employer in the state. Naveen Sareen, who is involved in

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"We want to be treated like human beings. There are still buildings which allow dogs in the lifts but not servants."

GANPAT PARDARE,
Founder of the Gharelu Kamgar Sangh, Bombay

the tourist industry in Palampur, says that it is almost impossible to find domestic help as they prefer to work on a daily wage of Rs 20 for the PWD. "They demand at least Rs 600 a month here, which is what they would get from daily wages."

D.B. Malik, a frequent traveller to Himachal Pradesh explains that once when he stopped in his car at a *dhabha* in Mandi he overheard two men talking about the change in their state. "They were looking at me and I heard one of them say, 'If Himachal Pradesh had not become a state we would still be cleaning utensils for *seths* like him'." In fact, Himachalis are now importing domestic help from the hilly tracts of western Uttar Pradesh.

Even the hills of western Uttar Pradesh are no longer fertile hunting ground for recruiting servants. Lila Dhar Joshi, 34, from a village near Almora, has worked as a domestic help in Delhi for the past 18 years. "But now that there are roads and construction activity, people have jobs," he says. "One of my relatives has opened his own tea-shop, another works for the PWD," he adds.

And then there's the contagious spirit of enterprise among domestic servants. Ravinder Dube, who came with just the shirt on his back, plies an auto-rickshaw in Delhi—bought on a loan of Rs 30,000 from his employers—for much of the day. The early and late hours are reserved for domestic work in the house of Maxwell Pereira, DCP, Delhi. And he is a home-guard. He now has a house in Sultanpuri, a Delhi suburb.

With the stigma attached to being a domestic servant getting more pronounced, Dube's ambition is to push his children up the social ladder. His son in Delhi's Birla Medical College is on scholarship. "I want him to go to college," he says. "I might do this work but I will make sure that my children will never be *naukars*." As a result, organisations trying to improve the working conditions of domestic help have banned the word servant. "We prefer to call them domestic workers," says Father Paul Vaz from Seva Niketan in Bombay.

Besides, the self-image of the servant has also changed: the servile and faithful Ramu Kaka of countless popular films willing to give his last breath for Chhote Sahib has passed into the realm of cinematic mythology.

EMOTIONS, perhaps sublimated earlier, now creep onto the faces of servants: the anger or hurt of centuries no longer banished to the underground of feelings. When his employer shouted at Ram Shanker, 19, for not responding instantly to her, he refused to work that day and didn't eat the whole day. Pritam Kaur, a middle-aged ayah working for a Delhi University professor, sulks the day her employers do not include her when they take the children out to eat—being "foreign-returned" liberals they had taken her initially and now feel bound to do so each time. Virginia, a maid in Defence Colony, disdainfully returned the slightly faded sari she was given by her employer.

The higher aspirations are a result of the information explosion which has engendered the desire for the good life among the domestic workers. Television, with its tantalising advertisements, has irrevocably changed lifestyles. *Binny Mangta, Sub Kuch Mangta.*

The '80s were a sort of boom time. Consumer flamboyance was at its peak with the signature of the Puppie—who literally wore his wealth on his person, car and house—was writ large over the decade. Conspicuous consumption with lavish parties which cost a lifetime's back-breaking work for a domestic servant now kindle envy. For example, at Diwali parties, people casually fling what would be 10 years earning for their servants on the table without blinking an eye-lid. Their children might spend in a day what it takes him a month to earn.

Consequently, the aspirations and the bargaining power of domestic servants have grown in proportion to the need for them. So, they want more and they can now ask for more. And employers have no choice but to meekly capitulate. Whether it involves offloading the black and white television on them or even having them eat on the dining-table. Rosy, a live-in maid in her mid-20s, often dines with Shanaz Bootawala and her two children in their Byculla apartment. "She's family now," says Bootawala.

What makes domestics indispensable today is the gradual disintegration of the joint family. In large families, work loads were distributed and child management shared. In nuclear families, the working mother—caught in a vicious circle because she has to earn to keep up with inflation—substitutes the servant for herself. She has nobody else to turn to, hence the desperation. All valiant efforts to bypass the servants have not always borne success. "People have got *chappati* machines, washing machines, mixies and vacuum cleaners. But there is an even greater need for

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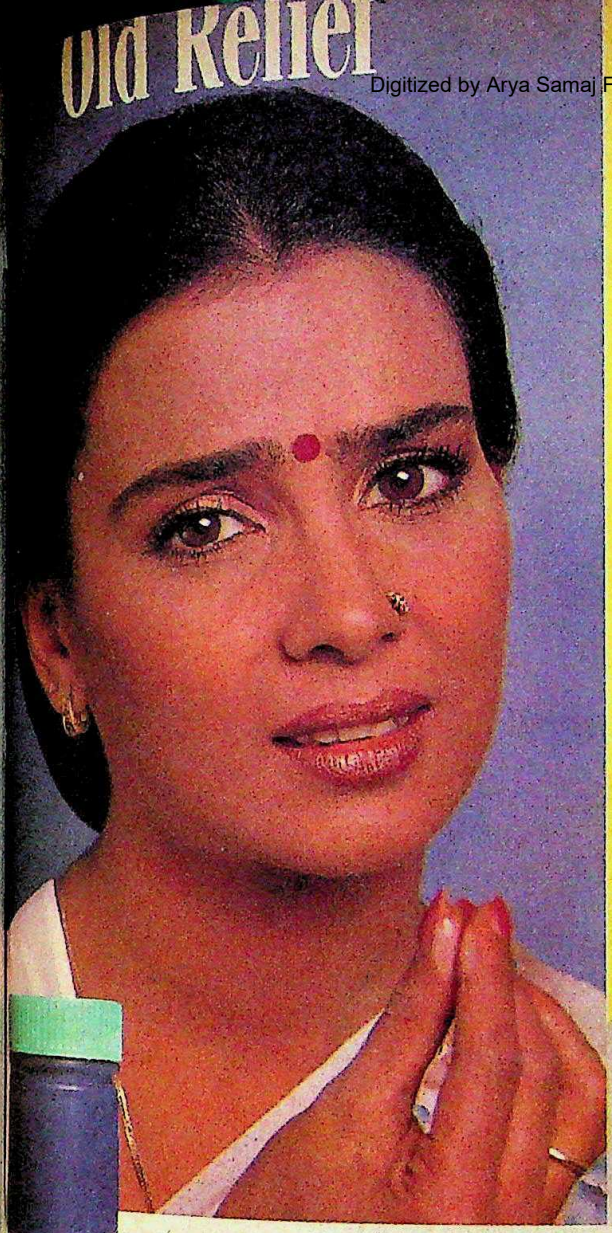

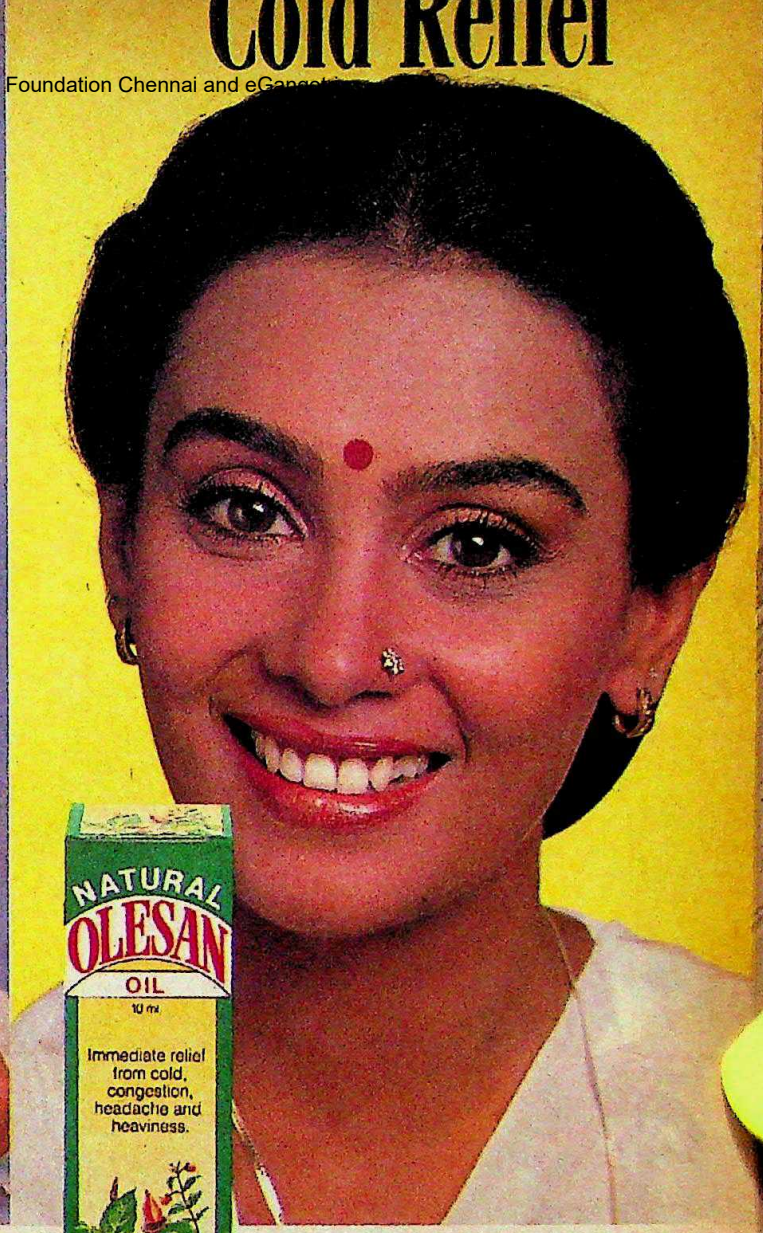

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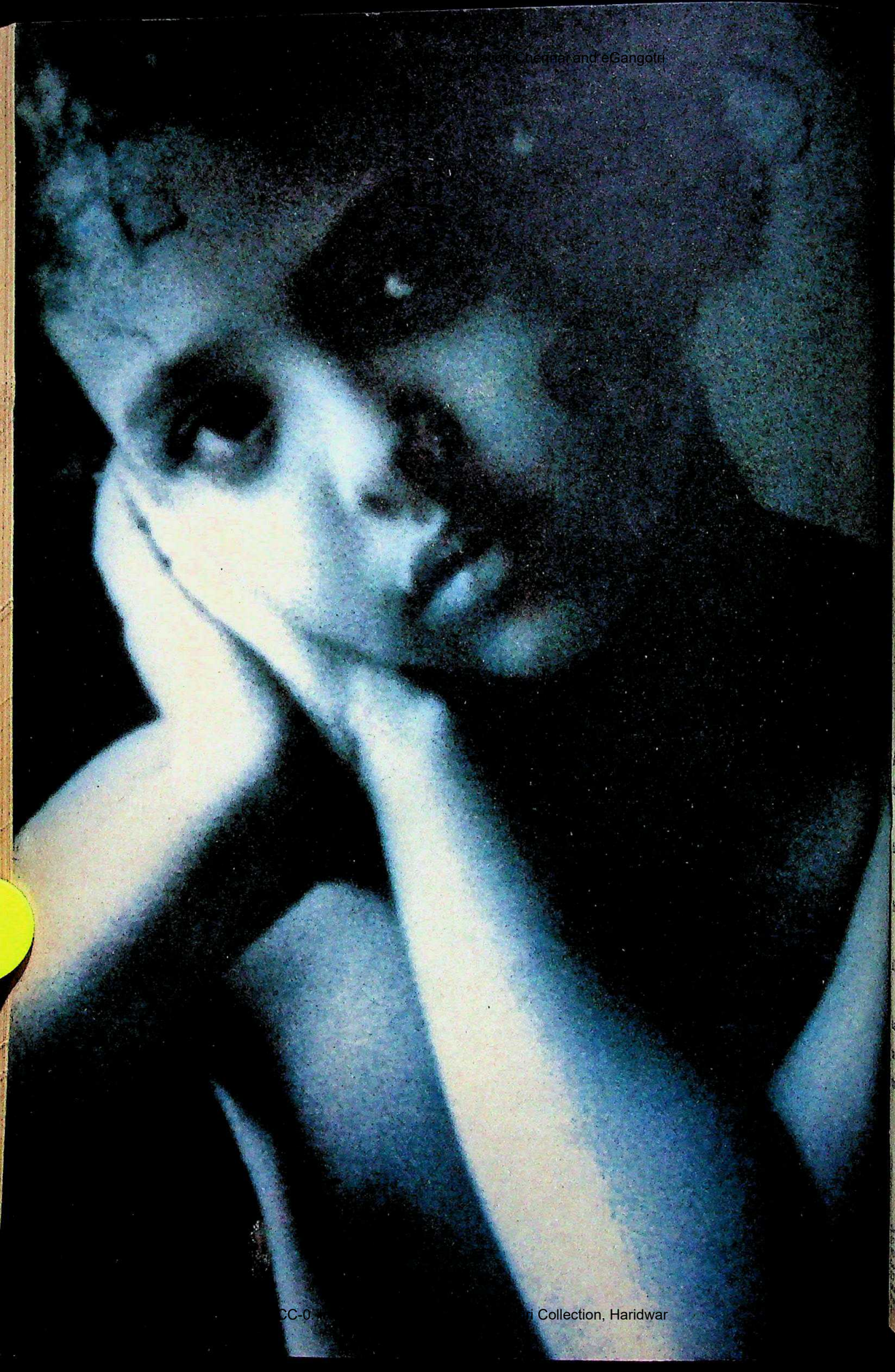

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The worst thing about a fire in the office is what it does to your home.

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THE MAGIC OF OLD SPICE MUSK

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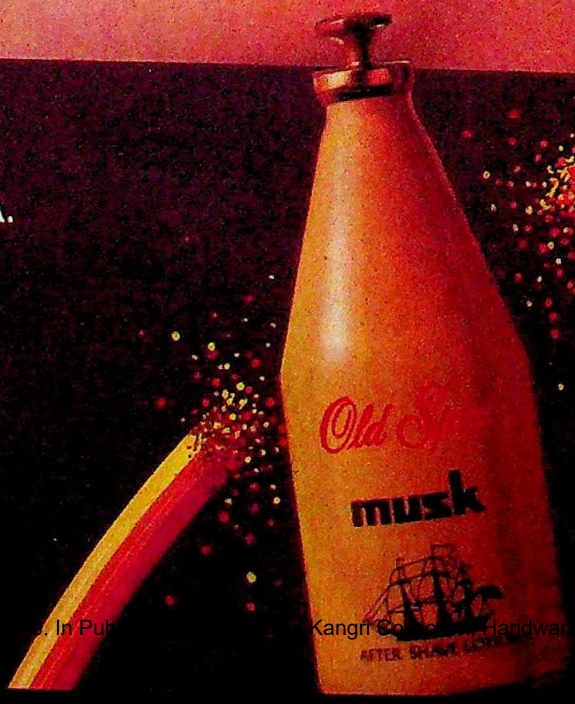
ON YOUR FACE.
ON YOUR BODY.
AND MAKE HER
SECRET FANTASIES
COME ALIVE.

ALSO AVAILABLE
BODY TALC
LATHER SHAVING CREAM
COLOGNE



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A MENEZES-SHULTON ENTERPRISE

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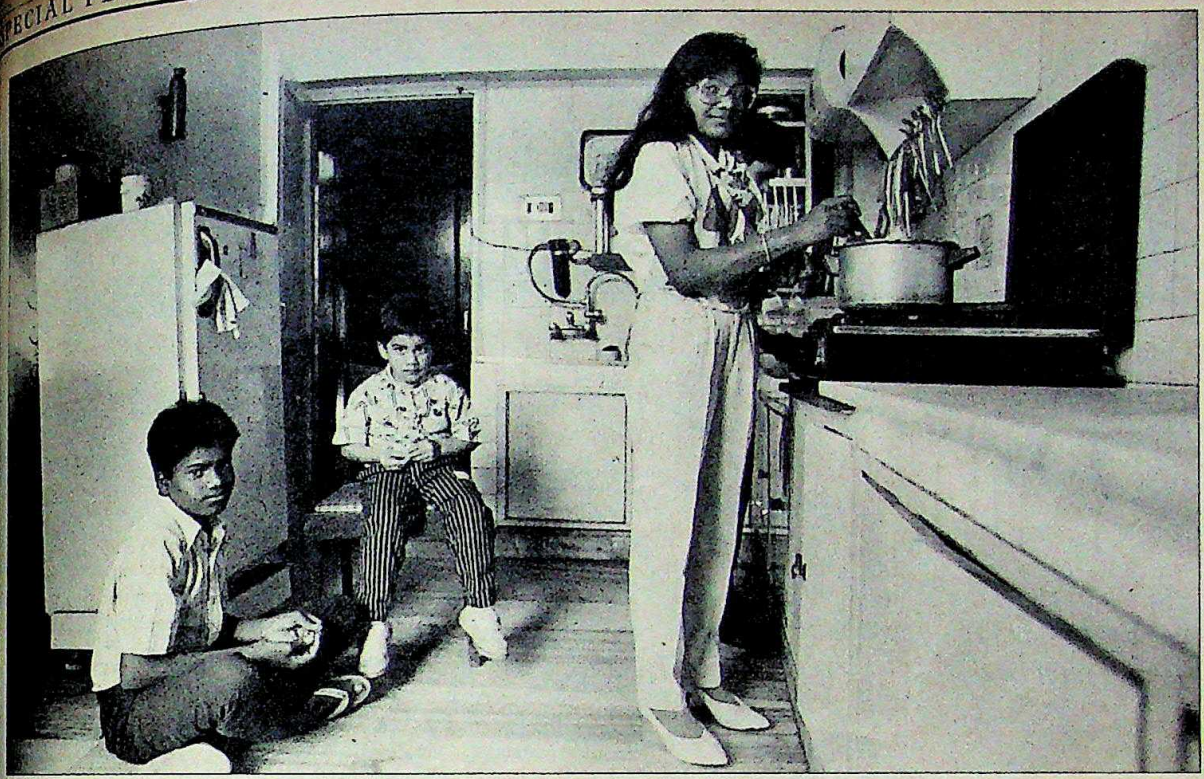

Kanta (right) who is highly fashion conscious works in a posh Delhi colony

It is increasingly difficult to tell servant from master as they dress alike. Jeans, trendy pull-overs, T-shirts and sports shoes are great levellers.

workers," explains Pardare. Machines go out of order. Besides, clothes still have to be put in and taken out of those magnificent washing machines.

Servants are also frustrated because they now know that the gap between them and their masters is not unbridgeable. And at a superficial, physical level the difference between servants and masters has already shrunk. In fact, it's getting more difficult to tell the servant from the master. The glut of cheap export rejects allows the domestic servant to look like his master, and often even nattier. Jeans, mass-produced, near-trendy pull-overs, T-shirts and sports shoes are the great levellers. Pushing this quiet little revolution in attire, too, is the upper class going the other way: the last decade has seen it take to *kurta pyjamas* like fish finally back in water.

But appearances are not all. Surface similarities perhaps breed even more discontent and unhappiness. Like Cinderella or Cinderfella he feels a different person in his Sunday clothes. "It's a complete change of identity," explains analyst Sudhir Kakar. "They do not want to be in that degraded situation when they leave the house."

Servants, now increasingly aware of their rights, are getting organised, and are even unionised in some big cities. The GKS has 70,000 card-holding members who pay a monthly subscription of Re 1. Area leaders hold weekly meetings to allow them to complain about their employers. Their massive morcha in April 1988 to the Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha really sent the shivers down employers' backs. If an employer suddenly sacks his domestic help the GKS area leader turns up at the door and tries to make the employer pay him compensation. Or if he physically abuses him, the leaders embarrass the employer by making him apologise.

A tentative beginning was also made in setting up a union a few years ago in Bangalore when a one-day convention of domestic servants was held. Woman's Voice, a collective in the city, is at present trying to organise the domestic servants. While Delhi may not have such a union, servants meet in servants' quarters or in colony parks.

No longer isolated and helpless migrants in the big cities, domestic servants have begun to organise social groupings which cut across regions and religions—an embryonic new class or *biradari* (community) almost. If an employer abuses his domestic help, others in the area often refuse to work for him. In Delhi's Defence Colony, for instance, they meet in a park every afternoon after they prepare lunch and share their problems and concerns. There's even an emergency whistle system: when one of them whistles in code, all those in the area leave whatever they are doing and congregate in the park.

Generally, the Bombay Union lobbies for better working conditions and just simple human rights. "We want a little more *prem* (love)," says Pardare. "Some of these buildings meet the sky and yet we cannot use the lift," he adds. So far they have been successful in getting the same food as their employers and some time of their own. They will no longer work the 18-hour-day which starts at the milk line and ends when the sahib goes to sleep after midnight. Some other demands: a month's annual leave with full pay and a minimum wage of Rs 800 for a full-time servant.

Organisations like the Placement

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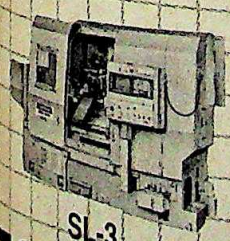

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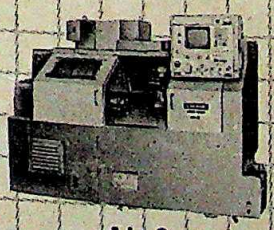

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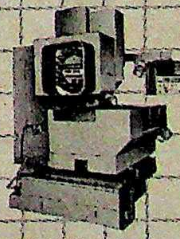

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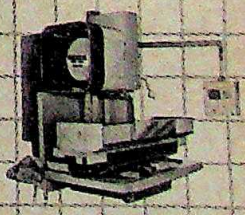

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Rosy, a live-in maid (left), sharing a meal with her employer Shanaz Bootawala and her two children

With the growing aspirations of servants, employers often treat them as part of the family, even having them at the dining-table.

Agency in New Delhi's South Extension always check the antecedents of the prospective employers—almost with the thoroughness of checking matrimonial proposals. There's even a code of behaviour for employers. "We like to see if the family is decent," explains Sister Leonie of Regina Pacis. "Our sisters visit the homes to see if they are being treated alright and we insist that the girls come here every Saturday afternoon and also learn some basic skills."

The demands include Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings off, and certain basic nutritional minimum requirements. Working in homes, in fact, is actually considered a stepping stone to jobs in beauty parlours or as typists in offices, according to Sister Leonie. The sisters train the girls, usually tribal Christians from the Chhota Nagpur area in Bihar.

One problem faced by maids is that of sexual advances from employers. The traditional privilege of *droit de seigneur*—nubile maids were forever dodging their masters' roving hands—doesn't show any signs of dying out. That touch across class continues. Some of them get pregnant after the unwelcome largesse of their masters. "There is a problem of intimacy," says Professor Veena Das of Delhi University. "People discuss the sexuality of their maids but it is couched in the language of concern and anxiety about the men in their household."

FEAR is the new element which has invaded the master-servant relationship. The criminalisation of the servant is a fairly new phenomenon. Petty, whimsical thefts have given way to major robberies and murders. In his study on servants done in Delhi a few years ago, Maxwell Pereira concluded that many of the murders involved servants—at least indirectly. There was even a case of a servant who killed the elderly couple with whom he had worked for 20 years. He just wanted to return to his village and start a new life. In this atmosphere of suspicion many people prefer to employ young women. But more recently, women are proving to be Trojan horses: they are the ones who often let the others in.

According to Pereira, the reason for the dramatic spurt in such crime is that this generation of servants—like the rest of the youth in the country—is unwilling to wait to make money. They want it fast. If the celluloid coolie can become a millionaire why can't they? Black and white television is a common sight in many servants' quarters, usually hand-me-downs from their bosses when they themselves switched to colour. There are also quarters with refrigerators, basic music systems, fans, even coolers. In fact, many servants will first make sure that their employers have VCRs before they consent to work for them.

As the market shrivels, familes of more modest means employ *mundus* (young boys)—sometimes sadly as young as seven years, who even have to look after children older than themselves. *Mundus* are available because they are not a part of the job market—at least not as yet. And it is here that there are cases of criminalisation of the employer: they often beat these children and treat them without any compassion. Last January a couple in Mayur Vihar in Delhi were actually arrested for the murder of their 12-year-old servant, Nanku.

More significant is the change in the class of servants. Sweeperesses, whose domain was strictly limited to the bathrooms, now work in the kitchen, part time.

By the turn of the century there just might not be any more domestic servants left, as was the case with England at the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the age of social security.

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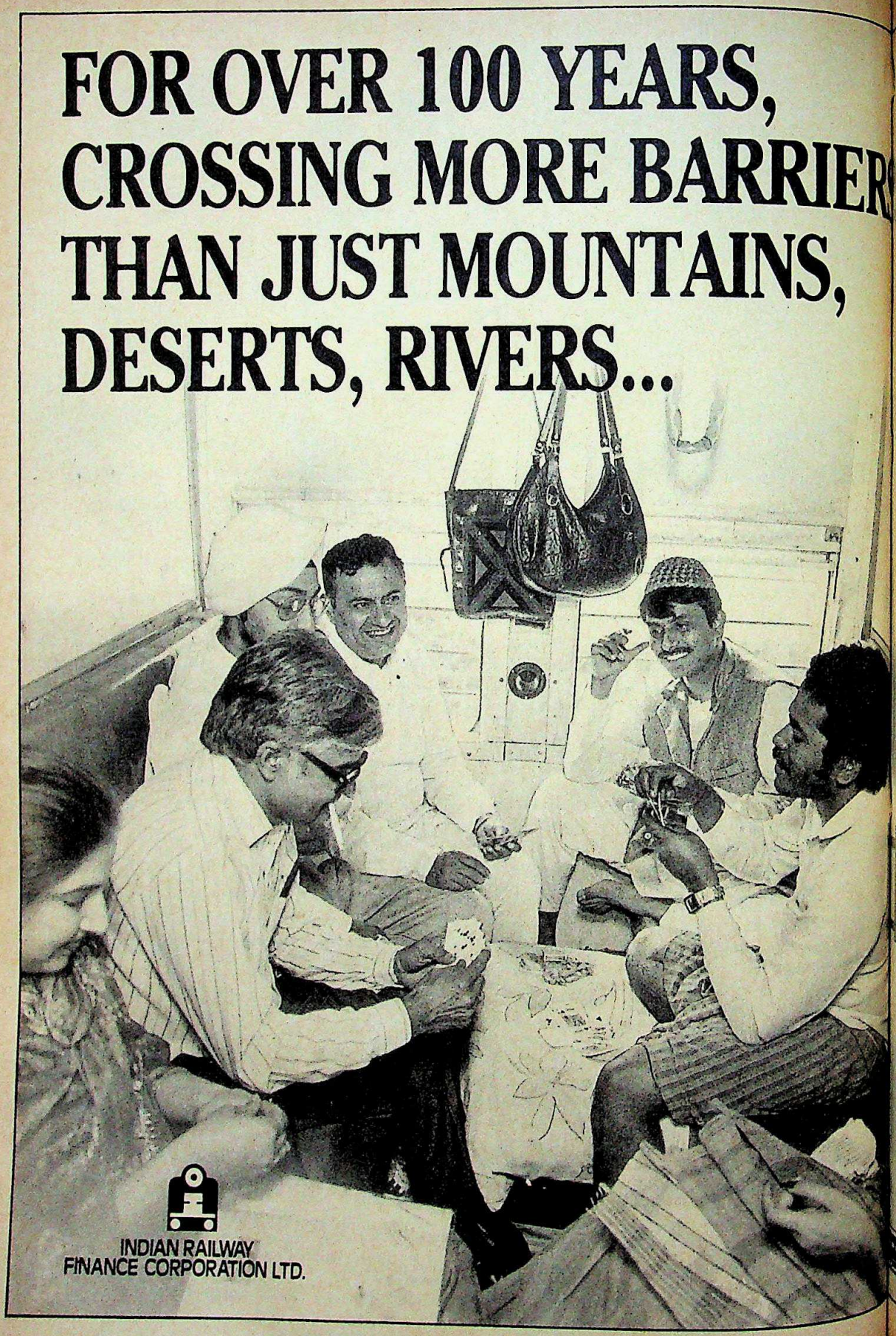

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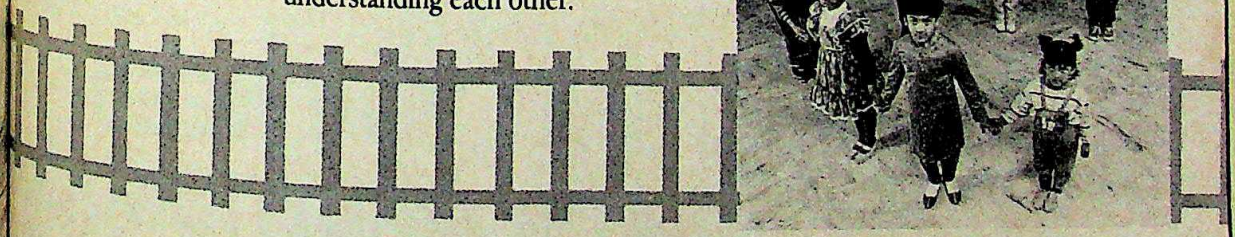

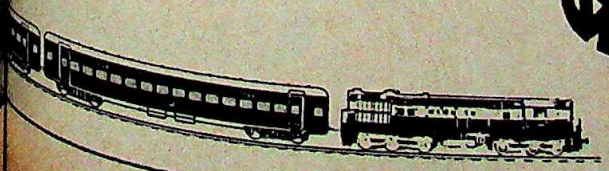

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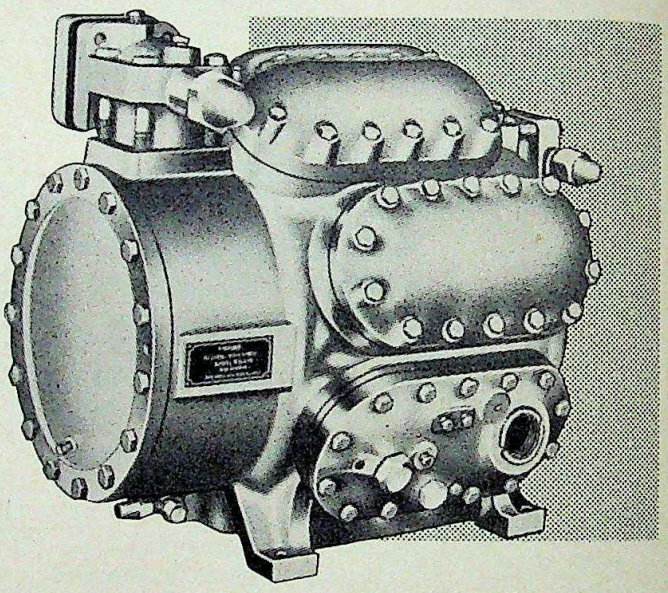

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TADAK-DHAM-DHAM

Irreverent Images

Bitingly satirical series on political reality

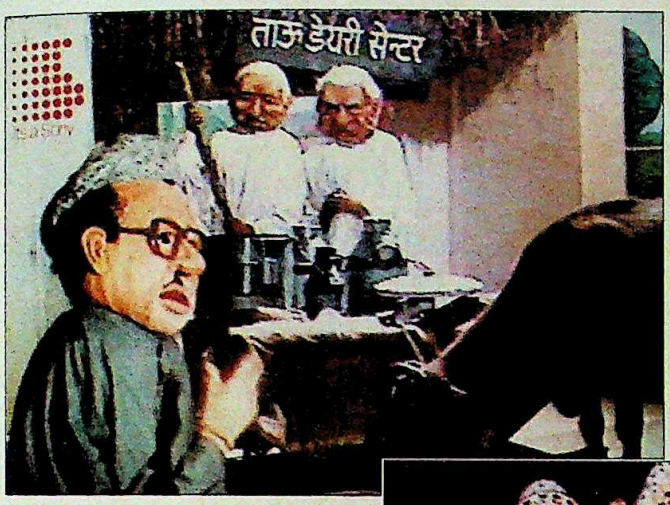
WHERE could Devi Lal's wild fantasy of punching V.P. Singh in the nose come true? Where could Larvani's glittering rath move to the strains of TV-*Mahabharat*? Where could Vishpai "Problem" Pratap Singh still give Chandilal and favoured son Ghotala—the duo running Tau Dairy Store—the jitters? And where could Raju Naseeb Gandhi—his half-shuttered store called Raju's General Store is to "open shortly"—continue to haunt them all, including a Jhandshekar, picturesque against the sylvan surroundings of his plush lake retreat?

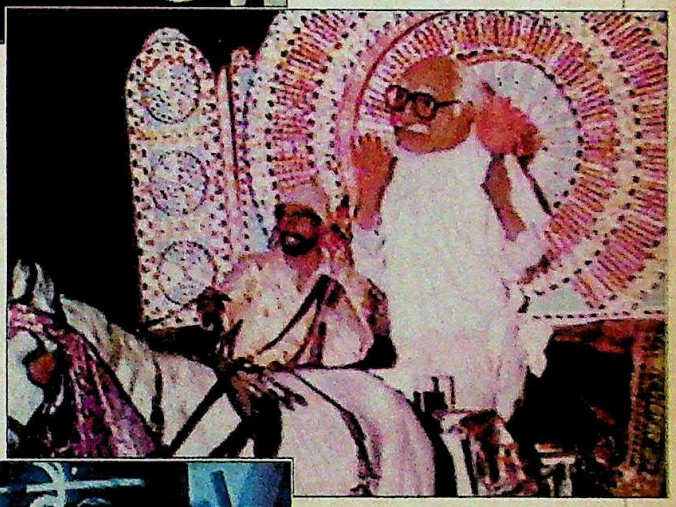
It all happens on Ramesh Sharma's side-splittingly funny and bitingly satirical series on contemporary political life titled *Tadak-Dham-Dham*, soon to be released on the video network.

This is clearly inspired by *Spitting Image*—BBC's highly irreverent spoof with life-like, electronically-mobile puppets. But it's not quite its spitting image. Happily so. Producer Sharma and director Pankaj Bajpai have indigenised the programme by adapting the *Nautanki* folk form and have used the Hindi language for wider audience appeal.

Unfortunately, the puppets are not anywhere near *Spitting Image*'s amazing caricatures with their latex faces which mould into a myriad expressions. "We just don't have those resources, but we will improve them as we go along," says Sharma. But they have moved on considerably from the roadside puppets with wooden faces. Using cloth and other materials which allow flexibility, Sharma has been able to give his caricatures a degree of expression. Two people act as one puppet: one for the face, the other for the body.

What's lacking in high-tech and resources has been more than compensated by the witty script and humour with real punch for a change. There's a *sutradhar* (narrator) who introduces the skits—all in rhyme. Even the puppets talk in rhyme, and on occasion break into song. There's even Hotilal, the proverbial common man and Basanti who represents the Janata—the people not the party. She is shrewder than Hotilal who gets taken in by the smooth-talking gallery of rogues. In a delightful scene Hotilal, with a gun, guards the Vote Bank into which Vishpai "Problem" Singh and Larvani—lotus one hand, *diya* (lamp) in the other—want to desperately break in.





Vishpai (above); Larvani's rath (right); Basanti and Hotilal: side-splitting spoof

The skits are perilously close to reality, better still, *realpolitik*. Sharma comes down quite hard on both the mandir and Mandal issues. But he has double protection. The programme begins with "National Lampoon and Caricatures Inc presents...", followed by that insurance-statement that all the characters are fictional. Moreover, he has changed the names of his targets and lampooned them all—even "Vishwamitra" (NTR) in saffron, "gilly-gilly" drag selling glasses to see the future. Jhandshekar does a double take as his glasses show Naseeb Gandhi sitting on the coveted chair. But when Chandilal comes along, he asks Vishwamitra to show him the past as future: Vishpai Singh firmly ensconced in the little chair.

Nevertheless, many of those involved in the production—which includes people from the National School of Drama and Doordarshan—wanted absolute anonymity because they feared the wrath of the Tau and Chautala, sorry Chandilal and Ghotala.

—MADHU JAIN

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◆ It's culture by any other name. But with a new fragrance. When the large and frequent doses of song, dance and culture DD style began to go down like castor oil, Mandi House mandarins came up with *Surabhi*—literally fragrance.

Fortunately, this 52-part half-hour series to go on air this month isn't tethered to a studio. Quite peppy, if a bit flimsy, it flits from mud palaces in Ladakh to the sculpture of a mother goddess in Goa and to other far corners of the country. There's enough sugar coating to make it palatable, including a culture quiz. The serial produced by Siddharth Kak has several directors, who include M.K. Raina, Manjul Sinha, Suhasini Moolay and Sushmit Bose.

◆ *Buniyaad* revisited? Ramesh Sippy's highly successful tele-soap tugged the heart on both sides of the border. The *Sholay* man's return to the big screen was not lucky and so he is back to the tube once more, and with great emotion—to pre-Partition India.

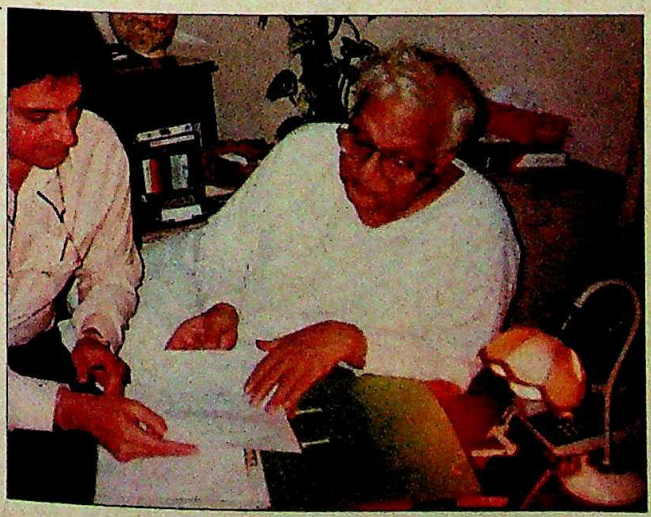
Parivartan, his new serial with Ajit Vachani in the lead, begins in 1939 and looks at two families torn by Partition. It's back again as well to Manohar Shyam Joshi who has done the script. Says Joshi: "We are also looking at the rise of the Indian business class, the different ethics of the new Bania and the traditional Bania."

Meanwhile, Sippy has been back to his roots in Karachi—accompanied by Pakistan specialist Shatrughan Sinha—in what seems to be life following art.

▲ Kak (right) in *Surabhi*: palatable panache

NAMAS BHOJANI

▲ Ramesh Sippy: tugging the heart-strings



▲ Reza (right) and producer-director Dheeraj Kumar

◆ From Krishna to Shiva, with a lot else in between. Dr Rahi Masoom Reza seems to have become the man for all gods. DD gods that is.

Barely had the arrows of *Mahabharat* stopped zinging when Dr Reza began work on *Om Namah Shivay*, a 108-part—like the divine garland—television serial on Shiva.

Dr Reza has written the screen play and dialogues for scores of Hindi films and, increasingly, television serials. However the character of Shiva, he says, has been with him from 1942. "If you don't know Shiva, you don't know anything about our country. He is not religion but the symbol of India."

◆ If the intention is to dispel panic, DD's not quite successful. Assurances from the prime minister as well as programmes on the country's sufficient oil reserves and bulging food storage godowns have only created panic. A case of the lady doth protest too much.

Meanwhile, the surfeit of tele-patriotism and tele-national integration continues. From quickies quoting film stars on how we are all one to long programmes usurping prime time.

The hallowed preserve of entertainment half-hour was broken into with a programme *Patriotic Songs* at 9 p.m. Glum-faced, they sang odes to the country. Unfortunately, they got a little carried away. They walked all over what seemed to be a map of India on the floor.

The prime minister, quite like his predecessor, also chose to address the nation at prime time—on Hard Times.

—MADHU JAIN

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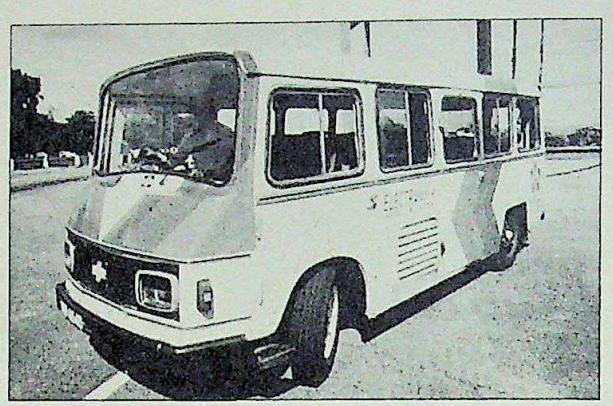
Energy Experiment

THOUGH the Gulf war has heightened the 'oil anxiety', there is no denying the fact that in the long run the issue of oil will continue to cause international concern verging on neurosis. Thus, the longing for a non-oil energy source to keep the wheels of life moving will always churn inventive minds to come up with the miraculous gadget. Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), Bhopal, has made its contribution to the search for alternatives through the Electravan, the battery-powered vehicle that can carry 18 to 20 passengers and cruise at a speed of 45 km per hour up to a distance of 70 km without recharging.



BHEL's battery-powered Electravan: plausible alternative

K. Ramakrishnan, BHEL's director (Engineering), says that the Electravan can reduce the country's dependence on oil imports and revolutionise the rickety and overloaded urban transport system. The use of 100 Electravans for 330 days at the rate of 60 km a day would save 28,270 kilolitres of diesel oil that is valued at Rs 18.85 crore. It is a seductive computation. The hitch is that one Electravan costs a whopping Rs 3.83 lakh, which is way beyond the means of the Government or that of any altruistic agency. The economics of it has therefore dampened the prospect of what appears to be a rather formidable breakthrough.

Though there are no takers as yet, except the Delhi Energy Development Agency, the BHEL is assembling a 40-seater Electravan which has packed battery-power equivalent to that of three Ambassador cars and two Maruti Gypsys put together. The question of battery-power remains hanging in balance: will the contraption work?

Potent Science

● IT was a medical first in the country when an eight-hour bypass surgery removed the block in the penile artery of a 23-year-old man restoring his sexual potency.

Performed by a team led by Dr Sudhakar Krishnamurti at the Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad, it has given a new fillip to the practice of a new branch of medical science in the country—andrology, which deals with the male reproductive system.

BABJI

Krishnamoorti: new hope

Recent studies in andrology makes it clear that in many cases the male sexual dysfunction is not rooted in psychological problems but in the biological system. One of the major reasons for male impotency is arteries getting blocked. In some cases it is male hormone deficiency and in others the veins draw away blood from the penis due to a failure in the valve mechanism which is a common defect even in the 18-25 age group.

Tough Task

● FROM the present plateau to the next peak: that is the task before rice researchers in India, who have to come up with a miracle solution to increase output from the present 70 million tonnes to over 100 million tonnes by 2000 A.D. The strategy has been identified: conserve biological variety; identify gene strains which can be adapted to climatic stresses; transfer tested genes to cultivated varieties through recombinant DNA technologies.

Frazzled scientists gathered in Hyderabad recently to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Directorate of Rice Research. They identified constraints that could scuttle their plans: limited irrigated land potential, fragmentation of land holdings, the deterioration of soil health care, and erratic monsoons. However, like true patriots, they are optimistic. They say that the target is not elusive.

Rare Surgery

● LAPAROSCOPIC cholecystectomy is an unpronounceable term, but it is the latest development in the surgical removal of malignant gall bladders. A surgery adopting the latest technology, for the first time in India, was performed on a middle-aged woman by Dr Tehemton Udwadia at Bombay's SJJ Hospital.

Laparoscopic surgery involves a two-or three-quarter inch incision in the abdominal wall. Specially-designed sophisticated instruments are used to remove the gall bladder with the help of a telescope (which until now was used only in diagnostic laparoscopy). The telescope helps the surgeon to get a close-up of the area to be operated upon.

In the earlier method of operation a large incision had to be made in the abdominal wall which severed delicate muscles and nerves. By the new method, the trauma that ordinarily accompanies surgery is enormously reduced. Compared to the earlier 12 days in hospital and a further rest of six weeks, laparoscopic surgery reduces convalescence period to a mere week. However, there are still risks involved. Warns Udwadia: "It must be stressed that it carries the potential risk of complications of both laparoscopy and open surgery."

The operation seen on the screen: potential risk

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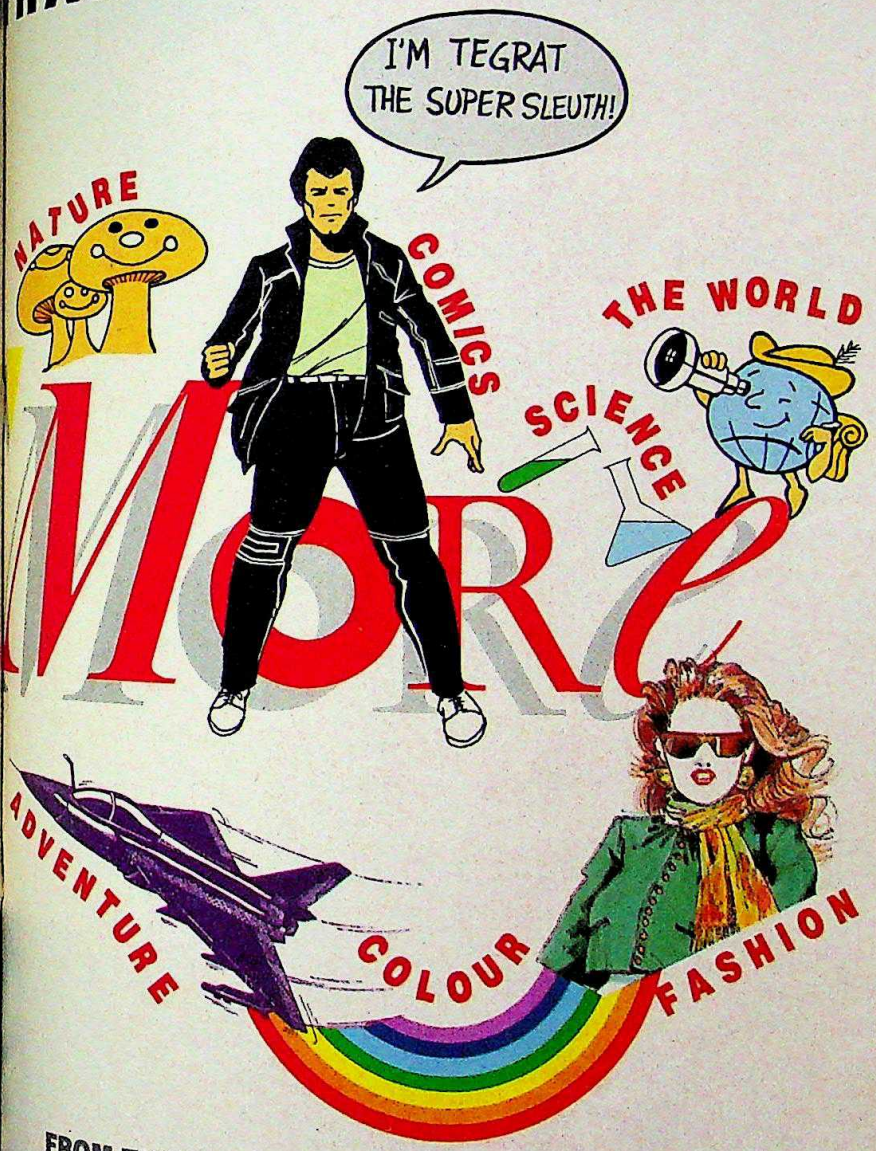

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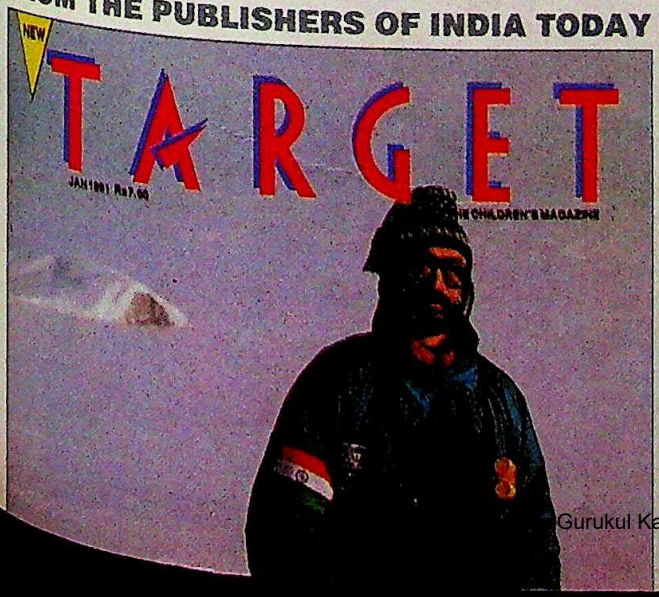

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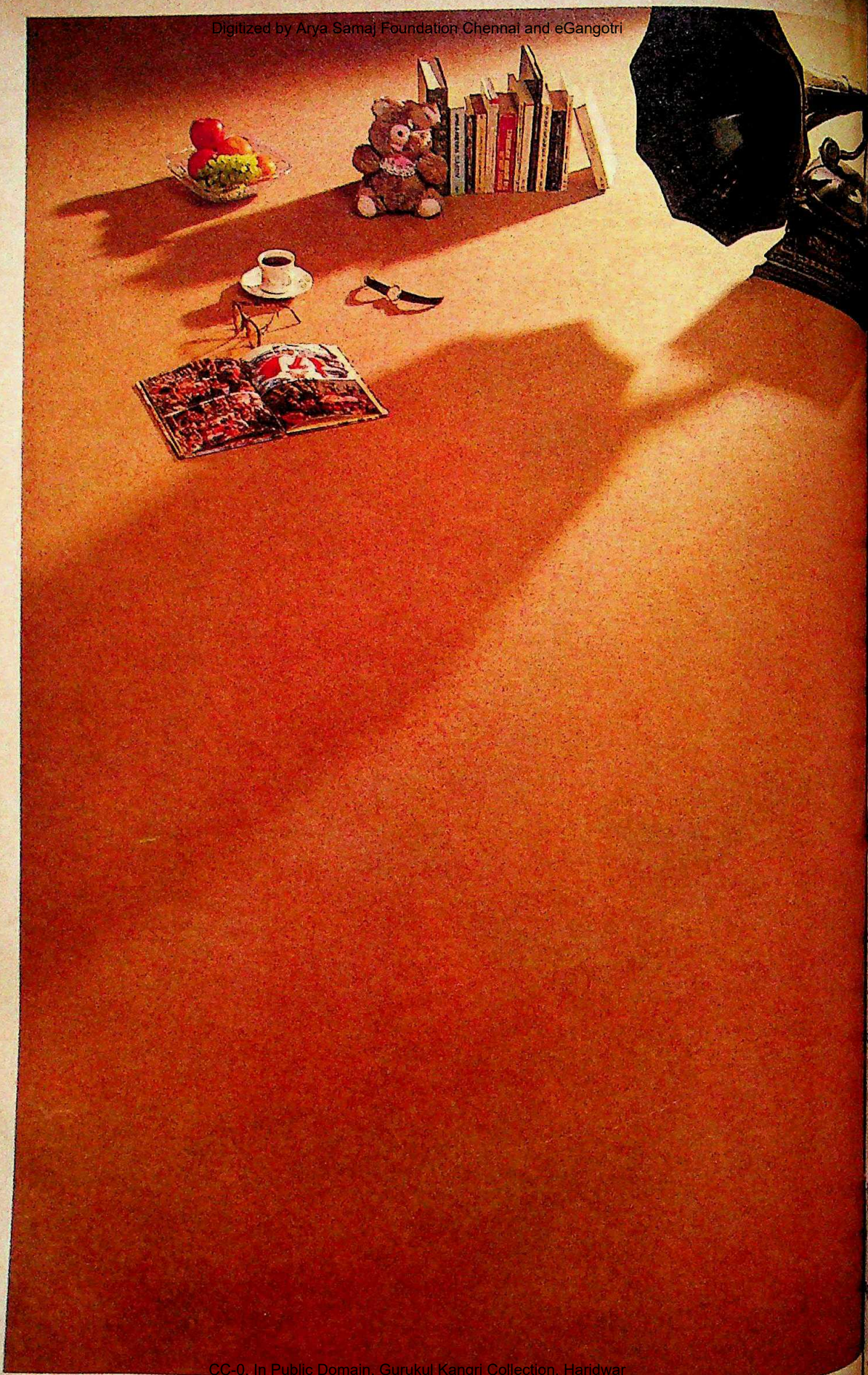

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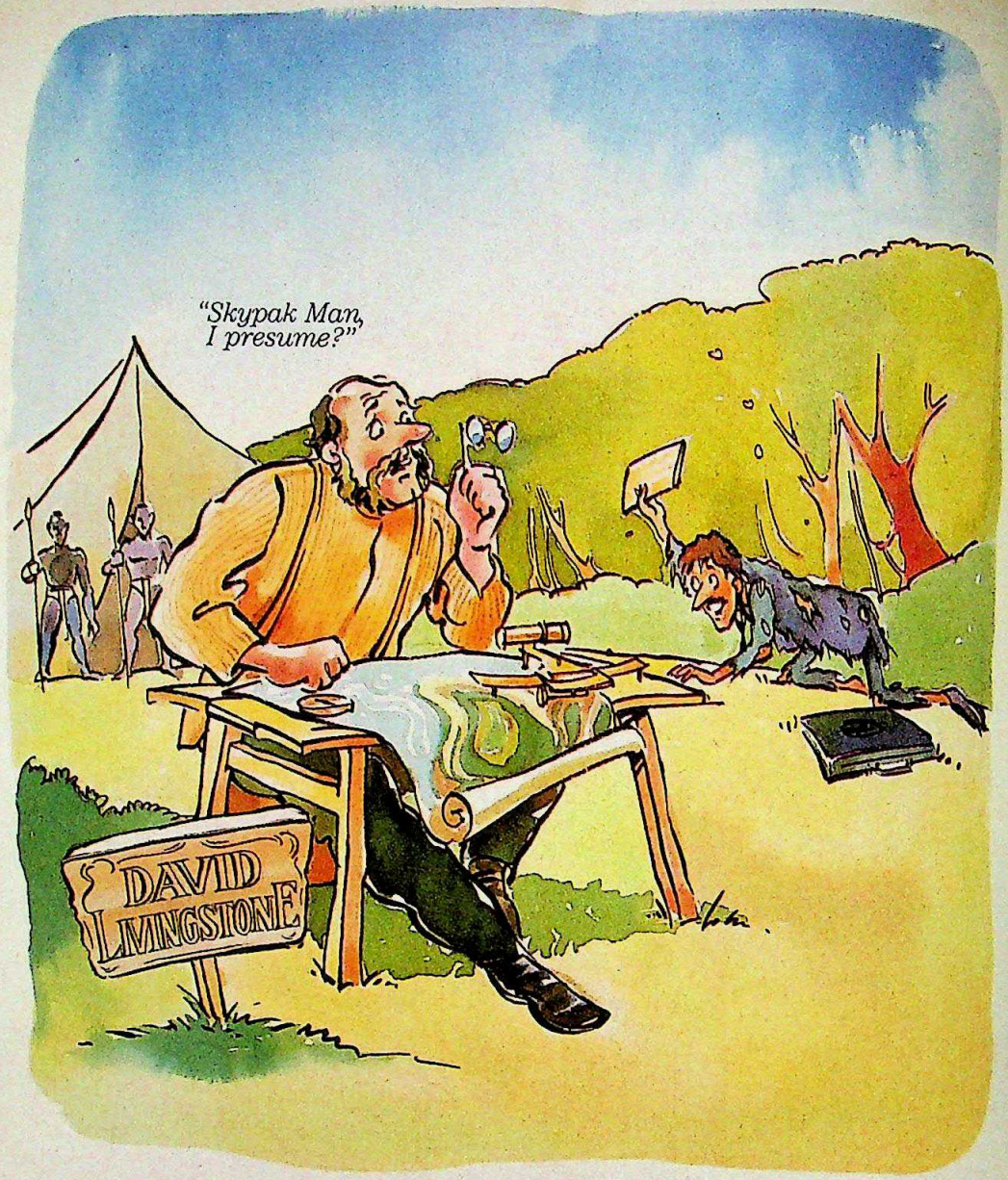

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Exclusive Club

● INS Kattabomman, the sophisticated Very Low Frequency (VLF) naval communication station was commissioned recently at Vijayanarayanam village in Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu. The new strategic acquisition of the navy has catapulted the country into an exclusive technology club, of which India is the seventh member. It all began in 1984 as Project Skylark and the Rs 122-crore station is a crucial acquisition of the country's maritime force.

PIB

Control room of INS Kattabomman: strategic advantage

The high-tech gadget, functioning now in most frontline sea-powers, helps in communicating with submarines even while they are out in the seas and submerged. Before its commissioning worldwide, submarines had to surface to receive signals through the Very High Frequency (VHF) channels, which put paid to the strategic advantage of keeping a submarine stealthily creeping underwater.

Named after the legendary Tamil freedom fighter, Kattabomman, the station is also capable of communicating with frigates and ships all along the coast because the VLF signals are capable of penetrating through water. There is also an additional advantage: unlike the VHF, eavesdropping is not possible any more.

Sobering Figures

● ALL this while people had moaned about the "brain drain" phenomenon, but they had no quantified data to back their Jeremiad. Now they have more ammunition: a study by the Centre for Planning Research and Action, Delhi, sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology, provides sobering facts and figures. It says that India lost $ 13 billion (Rs 2,34,000 crore) during 1960-85 through the exodus to the West.

Mitra: fancy solution

There are other interesting facts: the number of Indians abroad will rise from 4,10,000 in 1990 to about 9,40,000 by 2000; scientific and technical manpower accounts for 20 per cent of the work-force: engineers form 32 per cent of professionals, while 28 per cent are doctors and 5 per cent scientists.

Interestingly, Dr A.P. Mitra, director-general of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, refuses to panic. He has another ogre confronting him—what he calls the "internal haemorrhage"—the science students drifting into civil services, managerial jobs and banks. His solution is that the 11,000 firms in the country with R&D should take in 10 scientists each.

Controversial Pill

● RU 486, the controversial abortion pill being tried out now in clinical tests, is facing stiff opposition from right-to-life groups, abortion clinics and feminist organisations. The pill, widely used in most European countries and in the United States, terminates pregnancy in the first few weeks by causing bleeding in the uterus, dislodging the embryo or preventing it from being implanted in the womb. This chemical abortion technique was developed by French researchers in the early '80s.

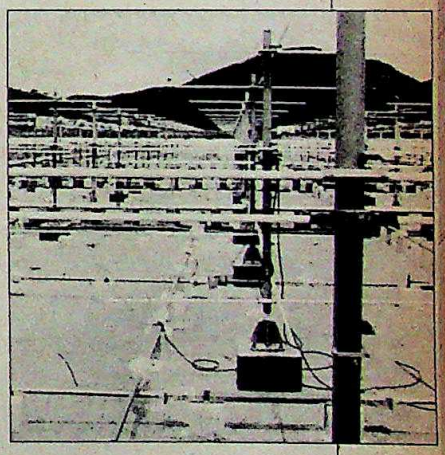
While religious groups are opposed to it on moral grounds, feminists and abortion clinic groups point out that the pill entails a long-drawn-out and painful process. First, it has to be administered under strict medical supervision: it requires at least three visits to a hospital. Second, blood transfusion is imperative if there is protracted bleeding. Therefore, the pill is considered unsuited to Indian women because they are generally found to be anaemic.

The Indian Council of Medical Research is keeping the trials under wraps because an earlier trial in 1989 had to be abandoned midway when there was a shortage of the drug. But Dr Usha Khanna of KEM Hospital, Bombay, feels that the pill would be useful even if it suits only 10 per cent of the women in the country, "given the increasing need and demand for family planning methods".

Powerful Device

● ANOTHER high-technology first for the country is the commissioning of Rs 7.50-crore MST (mesosphere, stratosphere, troposphere) radar at Gadanki, near Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. Designed by the Society for Applied Microwave Electronic Engineering Research, Bombay, the radar is an economical method for studying the upper reaches of the earth's air cover—the troposphere (up to 16 km), the stratosphere (between 16 km and 50 km) and the mesosphere (between 50 km and 100 km)—continuously and accurately.

The radar is a powerful information device for atmospheric scientists, who had, till now, depended on rockets and balloons which could feed back data only for the few minutes that they were drifting in the air. It is, apart from being the second-most powerful, next only to the one in Peru, the eighth in the world. "Clearly," says Professor U.R. Rao, chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation, "the only thing that can stop us is a lack of determination."



MST antenna: new heights

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(Tamil Nadu Government Undertaking)

No. 99, GREAMS ROAD, OFFICE COMPLEX, MADRAS-600 006 PHONE: 472917 & 476059 GRAMS: TAFCON

ACCEPTANCE AND RENEWAL OF FIXED DEPOSITS

PERIODIC INTEREST PAYMENT SCHEME (Scheme — I)			MONEY MULTIPLIER SCHEME (Scheme — II)			
Period of Deposit	Minimum Amount Rs.	Rate of Interest	Minimum Amount Rs.	Maturity value Rs.	Maturity value of additional amount of Rs. 1000/-	Yield per annum
25 months	5000/-	13.5%	3000/-	3966/-	1322/-	15.45%
36 months	5000/-	14%	3000/-	4545/-	1515/-	17.17%
48 months	5000/-	14%	3000/-	5220/-	1740/-	18.50%
60 months	5000/-	14%	3000/-	6000/-	2000/-	20.00%
Further deposits in multiples of Rs. 1000/- only.						

The Company has received general permission from Reserve Bank of India for accepting deposits from Non-Resident Indians.

1. The rates of interest/maturity value have been approved by the Government of Tamil Nadu vide G.O. Ms. No. 806 Transport Department dated 19.7.89
2. The maturity value under Money Multiplier Scheme have been arrived at based on the compounding of interest once in 2 months at a rate of not exceeding 14% p.a.
3. Minimum acceptable amount of deposit is Rs. 5000/- under Scheme-I and Rs. 3000/- under Scheme-II and further in multiples of Rs. 1000/- under both the schemes.
4. Interest on deposits on Scheme-I will be paid once in two months on fixed due dates (i.e.) 1st April, 1st June, 1st August, 1st October, 1st December and 1st February OR 1st May, 1st July, 1st September, 1st November, 1st January and 1st March to ensure that the first instalment of interest on every deposit is paid within 2 months from the date of the deposit.
5. Premature withdrawal of deposit is also allowed in exceptional cases at the discretion of the Corporation subject to RBI rules issued from time to time.
6. Fixed Deposit Rules provide for nomination.
7. The acceptance of Fixed Deposits will be subject to the terms and conditions indicated in the statement accompanying the application form.
8. Interest paid under both the schemes will be subject to deduction of income-tax at source, in accordance with the income-tax rules at the appropriate rate.
9. The Reserve Bank of India has granted general permission to accept deposits on non-repatriation basis from non-residents of Indian nationality/origin and overseas corporate bodies predominantly owned by such persons.
10. The bankers for dealing in Non-resident Indian deposits are Canara Bank, Thousandlights Branch, Madras-600 006, South India.
11. Particulars specified as per Non-Banking Financial Companies (Reserve Bank) Directions 1977 and Non-Banking Financial Companies and Miscellaneous Non-Banking Companies (Advertisement) Rules, 1977 are as under

a. Name of the Company : TAMIL NADU TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED

b. Date of incorporation of the company : 25th March 1975

c. Business carried on by the Company : To finance mainly Hire Purchase requirements of buses, lorries, etc. of the Transport Undertakings situated or operating within the state of Tamil Nadu

d. Brief particulars of the management of the Company : The Company is managed by Board of Directors consisting of Directors nominated by Government of Tamil Nadu

e. Names, addresses and occupation of the Directors

NAME	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS
Thiru **A.M. Sundararaj**, IAS Chairman	Chairman Thiruvalluvar Transport Corpn. Limited	No.33 McNicholas Road II Lane, Chetpet, Madras-600 031
Thiru **R. Santhanam**, IAS Director	Secretary to Govt. of Tamil Nadu Transport Department	13, 8th Cross Street Shastri Nagar, Adyar Madras-600 020
Thiru **M.A. Gowrishankar**, IAS Director	Special Secretary to Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Finance Department	No.14, II Main Road Gandhi Nagar, Adyar Madras-600 020
Thiru **A.P. Bhatikar**, IAS Director	Managing Director Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corpn. Ltd	1E South Bay Terrace 1st Main Road Gandhi Nagar, Adyar Madras-600 020
Thiru **K. Subramanian**, BE Director	Managing Director Thiruvalluvar Transport Corpn. Limited	P.No.2717, 7th Street, Y Block, 12th Main Road Anna Nagar West, Madras 600 040.
Thiru **R. Rathinasabapathy** BE, MBA, FIE Director	Director Institute of Road Transport	T.S.No. 42/2, Kalaimagal Nagar (W), Ekkattuthangal Madras-600 097.
Thiru **M. Jeyaraj**, BE, M.Sc., (Engg) FIE, Director	Director Motor Vehicles Maintanance Organisation	Al. 105, 3rd Street 11th Main Road Anna Nagar, Madras-600 040
Dr. R. Ganesan, Ph.D Director	Managing Director Pallavan Transport Consultancy Services Ltd	Plot No. 269, 17th East Street, Kamaraj Nagar Thiruvanmiyur Madras-600 041.
Thiru **R.K. Sharma**, IAS Managing Director	Joint Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu Transport Department	No. 8, Krishna Apartments 2A, Warren Road, Mylapore Madras-600 004.

f. Profits of the Company before and after making provisions for tax, for the three financial years immediately preceeding the date of advertisement

	(Rs. in lakhs) Profit Before tax	Profit after tax
1987-88	**11.20**	**5.32**
1988-89	**10.98**	**5.21**
1989-90	**17.95**	**10.75**

g. Dividends declared by the Company in respect of the said years **NIL**

h. Summarised financial position of the Company as appearing in the latest audited Balance Sheet:

(Rs. in lakhs)

LIABILITIES	As at 31st March 1990	1989	ASSETS	As at 31st March 1990	1989
Share Capital	581.00	556.00	Fixed Assets	9.74	4.10
Share Deposit	—	25.00	Investments	5.00	5.01
Reserves and Surplus	97.37	86.62	Current Assets	1142.06	1025.78
Secured Loans	802.00	934.80	Loans and Advances	16777.02	14925.29
Unsecured Loans	14662.54	12475.37			
Current Liabilities and Provisions	1790.91	1882.39			
Total	17933.82	15960.18		17933.82	15960.18

i. The Company can raise deposits under Reserve Bank of India directions upto a maximum of Rs. 67.84 crores based on capital structure on 31.3.90. The aggregate of the deposit held on the last day of the year immediately preceeding the financial year for the above purpose is Rs. 49.16 crores.

j. There are no overdue deposit other than the unclaimed deposits.

k. DECLARED

i. that the Company has complied with the provision of the Directions of the Reserve Bank of India applicable to it.

ii. that the compliance with the Directions does not imply that the repayment of deposits is guaranteed by the Reserve Bank of India, and

iii. that the deposits accepted/renewed by the Company are unsecured and rank pari passu with other unsecured liabilities.

l. The advertisement is issued on the autority and in the name of the Board of Directors of the Company, the text of which was approved by the Board on 27.9.90 and a copy of it has been filed with the Regional Office of the Department of Financial Companies, Reserve Bank of India, Bangalore.

(On behalf of and as authorised by the Board of Directors)
for Tamil Nadu Transport Development Finance Corpn. Ltd.
R.K. Sharma
Managing Director

- ★ **TAMIL NADU TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED (TDFC) is a fully owned Government Company.**
- ★ **This company is managed by the Board of Directors nominated by the Government, mostly senior I.A.S. Officers.**
- ★ **The total deposits have crossed Rs. 168 crores.**
- ★ **TDFC enters international arena. RESERVE BANK OF INDIA has permitted TDFC to accept Non-Resident Indian deposits on non-repatriation basis.**
- ★ **TDFC provides full security for your investment.**
- ★ **No bad debts or write-off in the last 15 years.**
- ★ **TDFC accepts both individual and institutional deposits on attractive terms and provides prompt service.**
- ★ **TDFC has been making profits since inception.**

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Dance

DANCE FESTIVAL (Mahabalipuram). Madras will have an open air Khajuraho-like dance festival at the Mahabalipuram beach resort, in front of the famous "Arjuna's penance" monolithic monument. To be held between February 15 and 17, the artistes who will perform at the festival include Sonal Mansingh, Padma Subrahmaniam, Radha and Raja Reddy, a troupe from Kerala's Kalamandalam and S.R. Raghupathi.

SAGARA '91 (Kovalam Beach). A sea-side festival of folk arts and crafts of Kerala hit Kovalam like a *tsunami*. Organised by the state's Department of Tourism, it was aimed at attracting the foreign tourist to Kerala. And the message went home with many watching martial arts like Kalaripayattu, the hurling of metal mirrors, dance dramas and Kathakali.

Odd ends

RG's (Hotel Nataraj, Marine Drive, Bombay). Opened by hotelier Ravi Ghai, RG's is a restaurant, night club and disco rolled into one. With a high-tech sound and light system, London trained disc jockey, "video wall" with 24 TV screens flanking the sunken dance floor and stylish black interior by Subash Goyal, RG's will sign on 300 members for its select fare.

NAMAS BHOJANI

Nataraj: exclusive fare

Art

SATISH CHANDRA (Taj Art Gallery, Bombay). Even though the landscape is looked down upon by critics, it has always fascinated painters. Lucknow-based Satish Chandra, creates landscapes that start a dialogue between the formal academic approach and the lyricism of semi-abstraction. Chandra works towards "establishing a bond between man and nature," and a very strong streak of rebellious environmentalism is evident in most of his paintings.

Chandra's landscape

THE LINE (by artist S.S. Vasudev, British Deputy High Commission, Madras). Vasudev's drawings are all ink on paper and iterate his belief in the line as a medium of unrestricted expression. Most of his works, a forceful collusion of lines, evokes the unison of man and beast, trees, reptiles, earth, sky and fruit in a celebration of life.

SANDEEP BHATIA (Basement Gallery, Bombay). Lucknow's Sandeep Bhatia, whose figurative work was on show at Mahendra Doshi's Basement Gallery in Bombay, has developed a distinctive style of his own, using human figures almost like hieroglyphs to convey a troubled, nihilistic vision.

VIDUSHI BHATNAGAR (Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad, Bhopal). Like any good gallery, the Parishad is choosy about its artists. Last fortnight, when it allowed nine-year-old Vidushi to hold her maiden exhibition, it had reason to do so. She has bagged several awards at various child art competitions. Her brush shows such maturity that many suspected her mother, an art teacher, had been painting for the lass. Many tests were held and the child prodigy came out with flying colours. Says Vidushi, a standard three student: "I like to draw figures."

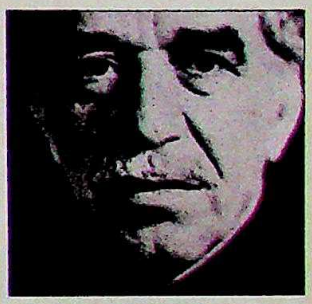
Bhatnagar: child prodigy

Theatre

MUMMENSCHANZ (Swiss group). This group was founded 20 years ago and has gradually honed its performance into superb mime. No sounds are used as the masked performers flit between abstractions and hard ground reality. Their itinerary takes them to Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore. Their presentations are often so abstract that the performance starts slurring. But what sense of timing! What relief from everyday violence!

Books

THE GENERAL IN HIS LABYRINTH (by Gabriel Garcia Marquez; Jonathan Cape; Rs 328). No other living writer could have written this book. Bland history becomes gripping narrative as Marquez brings alive the legend of Simon Bolivar, the liberator who dreamed of uniting all of South America, only to die a disillusioned man. With his mix of memory, myth, history and magic, Marquez has produced a work that will rank with his greatest.



Marquez: master tale

SOURCES OF INDIAN TRADITION (two volumes; edited by Stephen Hay and Ainslee T. Embree; Viking; Rs 590). From the Vedas to Jayaprakash Narayan, these classic source books provide concise information on the well-springs of Indian thought and tradition.

Movies

VEMBANAD (Madras Film Festival). This is an experimental film from Kerala, without dialogue. The highlight is the haunting music of Louis Banks and gaps of creepy silence. Director Sivaprasad, an FTII product, believes that dialogues were not necessary while portraying the familial complexities of a household living on an island, surrounded by the backwaters of Kerala. At the Panorama, it evoked a mixed response.

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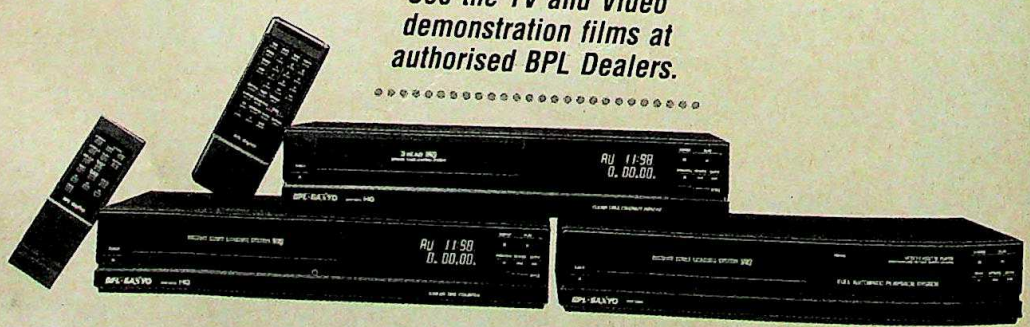

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CRICKET

Pitching for Pace

The Madras-based MRF Pace Foundation leads the quest for fast bowlers

THEY are Indian cricket's dirty dozen. Twelve strapping young men trained for three years in the difficult art of pace bowling. They are the first batch to come out of the MRF pace foundation in Madras set up in July 1988 to mould fast bowlers who would come snorting down the run-up and give Indian cricket, dominated for ages by scrawny wrist-spinners, a more fiery, lethal look.

India's search for a fast bowler is almost as old as the game. There were of course, brief interregnums when the country basked in the glory of the fiery bowling by an Amar Singh, a Nissar Mohammad, and closer to our times Ramakant Desai whose puny frame exuded unbelievable power. Not all of them will find niches in the game's Long Room of fame alongside the Harold Larwoods and the Wesley Halls but for Indian cricket they still remain sources of inspiration.

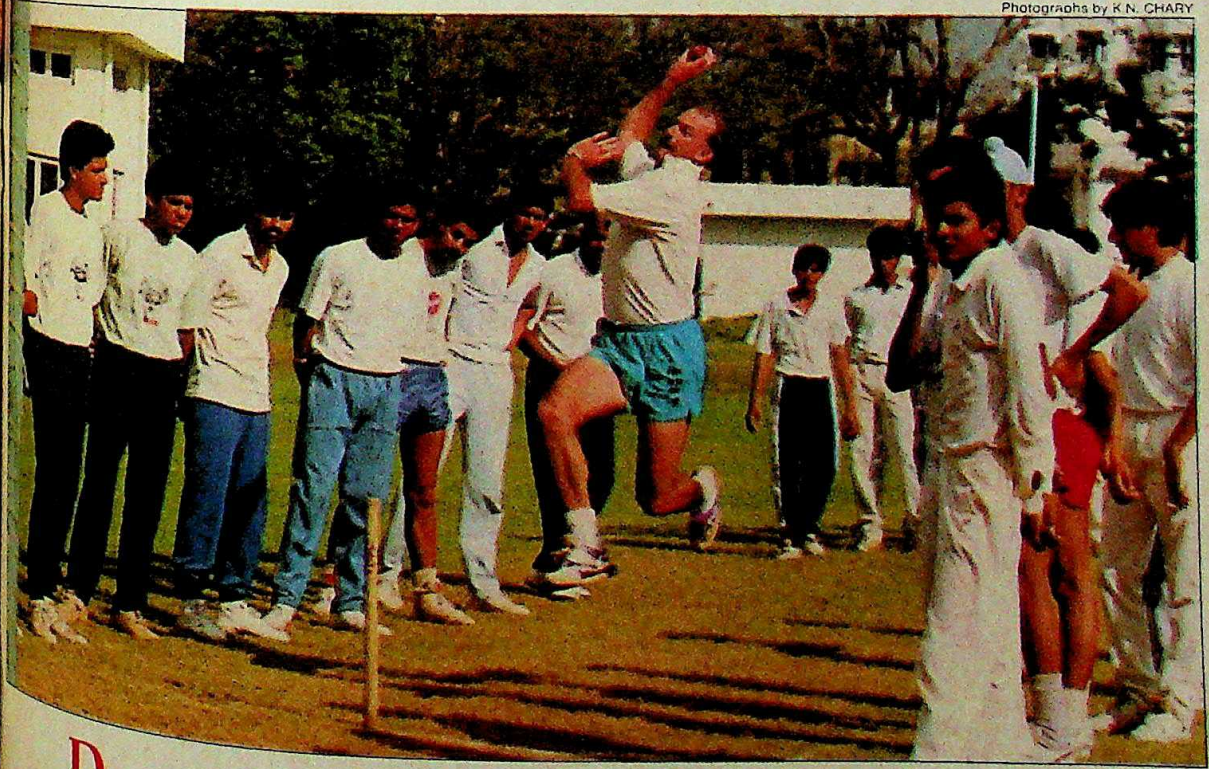
Even as fast bowling was finding new and lethal exponents elsewhere, India had to open its campaigns with bowlers who were well-meaning but produced just enough pace to take the shine off the ball. Kapil Dev knocked away that deep-rooted feeling of helplessness of Indian cricket and made the world look up. But all those who were capped later on—the valiant Chetan Sharma, the erratic Salil Ankola, Rashid Patel, change-bowler and all-rounder Robin Singh and Sanjeev Sharma—have been edged to the shadows and only Manoj Prabhakar, apart from recent addition Atul Wassan, have shown considerable improvement. But the search it was obvious had to continue.

The MRF Foundation set up by an ambitious entrepreneur, the late Ravi Mammen who was managing director of Madras Rubber Factory (MRF), came as the answer. Success was immediate. One among the first batch selected from among 200 aspirants by Australia's legendary fast bowler Denis Lillee, Vivek Razdan has already played Test cricket and all others in the first batch have played Ranji Trophy matches. Now, their studded boots restlessly scratching the turf, they are ready to enter the arena where big boys wait.

"I hope to get into the Indian team within the next three years. Once I get in I want to stay," says Harvinder Singh, 20, from Gwalior. Shakti Singh, 19, from Himachal Pradesh is more impatient saying: "I will get into the Indian eleven next year."

Whether their ambition runs far ahead of their abilities will soon be proved. But the youngsters' performance speaks a lot for the good work the foundation has put in. The foundation has all the trappings of a fast bowler's haven. Fast pitches, a gymnasium, swimming pool, a dietician, fitness

Photographs by K.N. CHARY



Dennis Lillee has put together a scientific training programme that in three years has transformed 12 teenagers into fast bowlers of great potential.

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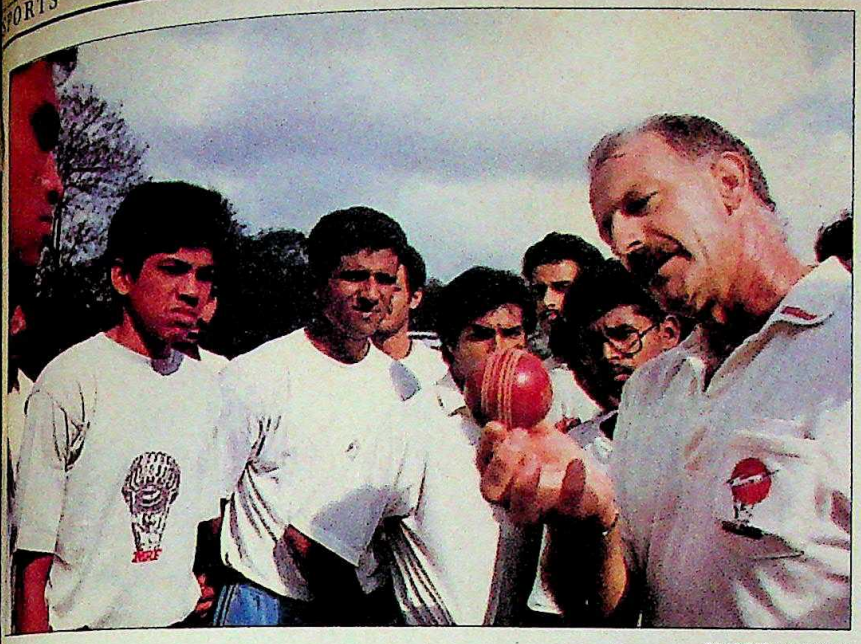
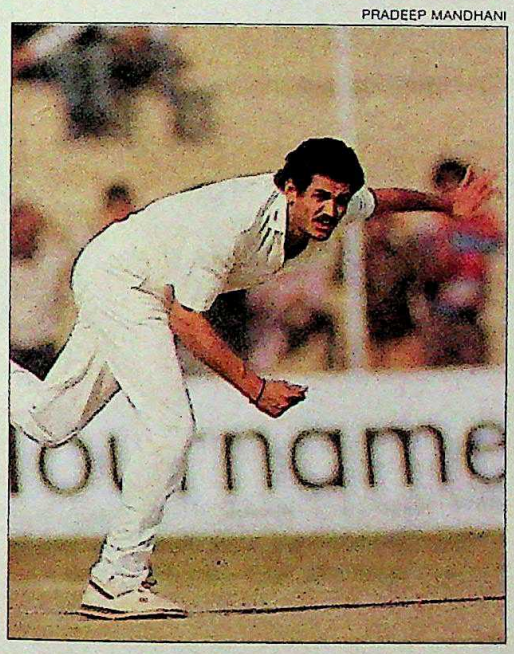


Lillee coaching and (right) Razdan

PRADEEP MANDHANI



expert and a sprint coach. "The facilities are marvellous. I would have been a better bowler if I had trained here," says Lillee who has taken 355 wickets in a chest-thumping 70-Test career. The latest addition to the panel is John Inverarity, the Australian Test player, under whom Western Australia won the Sheffield Shield four times in five years.

MRF spends Rs 20 lakh a year to maintain the high standards and so well-known has it become that the foundation is now planning to take batches of young boys from England, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. "We are waiting here desperately to see even one of these boys become India's number one. Who's bothered about the roots" asks Vinoo Mammen, MRF's executive vice-chairman and elder brother of Ravi Mammen.

MRF, Lillee and T.A. Sekhar, the 33-year old fast bowler and chief of the foundation, have spared no effort. The fitness programme at the foundation got a fillip with the induction of specialist Daryl Foster of Perth. Then the boys needed to be tutored about injuries—a spine injury can cripple a bowler—and so Dr Anand Joshi, a sports medicine specialist from Bombay, was hired. Under Dr Joshi's guidance medical tests are conducted to determine their blood count, fat content to the torque experienced by their knee and shoulder joints during delivery. The analysis helps to determine what a bowler must do to achieve optimum speed and length.

More than anything it is in the style of bowling that the boys pick up lessons which they would not have by just trying to send the ball hurtling down the pitch. Like the chief coach Sekhar used to do as a youngster on the Marina beach in Madras. He became a fast bowler all right but played only two Tests. "Now I realise that I could have learnt fast bowling in a more methodical manner," he admits. Now he along with Lillee helps the boys determine whether the side-on action is better than the chest-on one, or whether a mixture of both is good for the bowler's spine.

Fast but erratic Razdan exemplifies the advantages and pitfalls of robotised training.

Inverarity, who was responsible for Lillee's comeback after the crippling stress fractures he sustained in his back during the Caribbean tour of 1972-73, admits that life is tough in India for a new player, especially a bowler. "I help them focus their mental power on their abilities to perform," he says.

Victims of pressure like Vivek Razdan will benefit if they could build such a psychic cocoon around themselves. Launched into Test cricket even before he had played Ranji Trophy, this 20-year-old claimed five wickets in his first Test appearance at Sialkot during the 1989 tour of Pakistan. Razdan scalped some of the best batsmen in the game like Shoaib Mohammed, Rameez Raja, Salim Malik, Imran Khan and Javed Miandad. "Five top wickets and yet the boy was dropped from the Ranji squad which was to play in Delhi the next week," complains Sekhar. Razdan was selected for the 1990 New Zealand tour but was never played in any of the Test matches.

There is no dearth of advisors who will crowd around a new talent, some with the intention of appearing as the moulder of raw talent, others to get a glare of the flashbulbs, and some "who'll try to mislead them deliberately," as Lillee says.

It has, however, to be admitted that Razdan never had the time to develop the temperament for big cricket, having leapt across the Ranji Trophy and Duleep Trophy stages. But hopefully Razdan has learnt his lessons.

Razdan exemplifies the advantages and pitfalls of a robotised training programme like that of the MRF foundation. Ultimately like in any other sport, cricket too will have to be played to be enjoyed like the boys do in the wind-swept Caribbean beaches. But in a system which has its limitations the MRF foundation has undoubtedly shown the way.

—BINOO K. JOHN with ANAND VISWANATHAN in Madras

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JIYAJEE FABRICS

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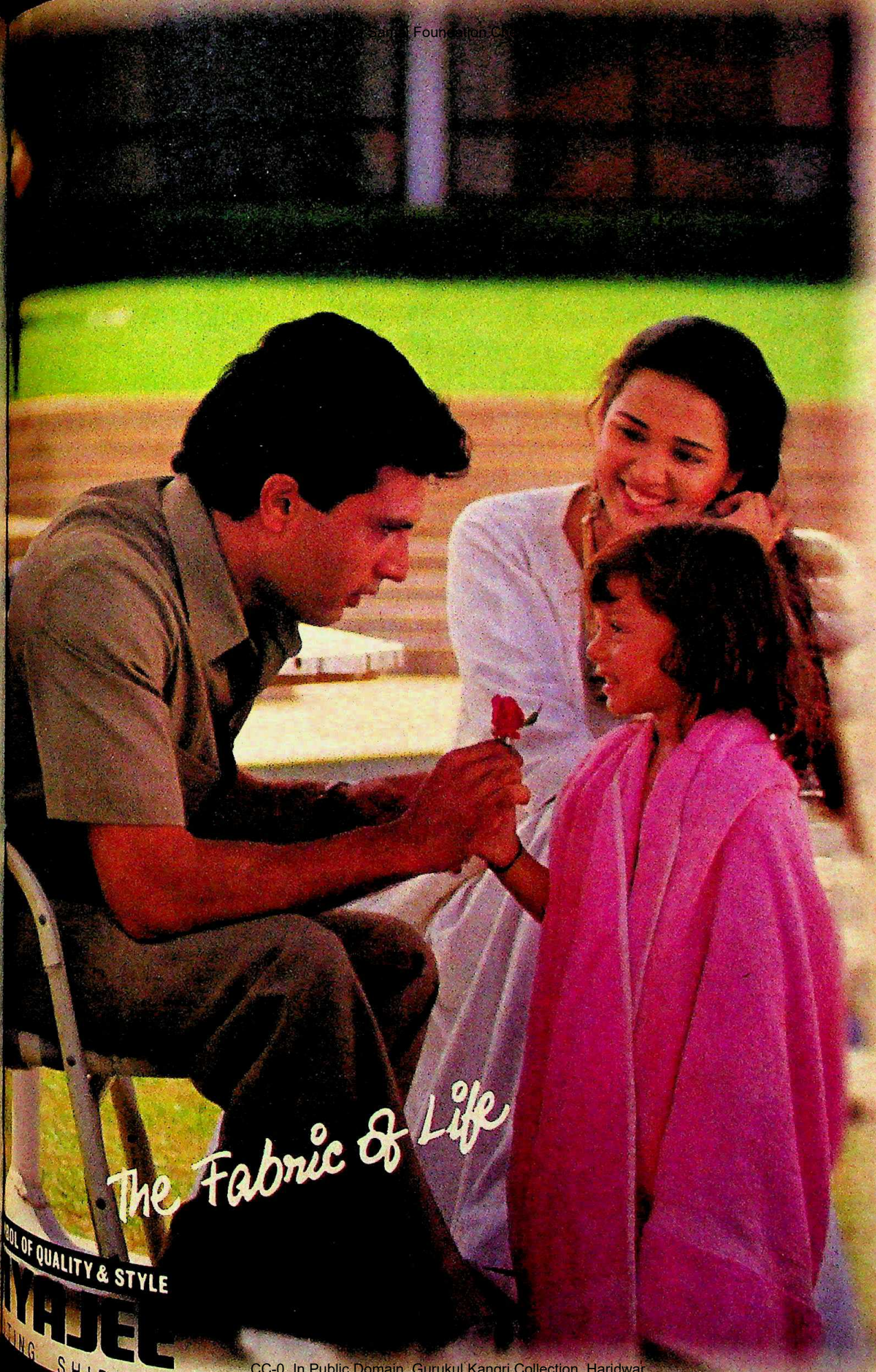

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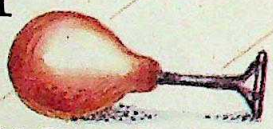

The Tisco office in Jeevan Tara Building, New Delhi, done with Gypboard. Architects : Kothari and Associates

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THE PRESS

A Marketing Blitz

All out efforts to sell papers and space

THE times they certainly are a-changing. As the country's corporate culture finally catches up with the print media, a new breed of managers is fast taking over the industry. And ways of hawking the newspaper and its advertisement space are changing at a rapid pace. As competition increases, big business houses enter the fray, and television presents advertisers with a potent medium, media groups are beginning to pull out all stops in an effort at pushing their publications. Marketing techniques and strategies are becoming sophisticated, and the financial bottomline of most media groups is consequently looking healthier. Says Satish Mehta, till recently the marketing director of Bennett, Coleman and Company (The Times of India group): "The dynamics of business have changed from a calm sea to a stormy ocean."

True, there always have been circulation wars and tall claims. But by and large the media was untouched by marketing Darwinism. The papers refrained from even calling each other competitors, preferring a euphemistic 'contemporary' instead. The circulation departments were concerned mostly with distribution and headed by people with little experience of pushing a product in a competitive market. And the newspaper had remained firmly an editorial product.

Those days are now gone. In the planning sessions of media companies the talk now is more of brand positioning and market niches. Old hat to somebody selling soaps but revolutionary in the world of newspapers. Thus *The Times of India* in Delhi, after years of snapping at the heels of *The Hindustan Times*, decided to concentrate on upmarket segments. During the sesquicentennial celebration the group made an effort to identify with the affluent by sponsoring rock concerts. At 1.65 lakh, its circulation is half of *The Hindustan Times* but the bulk of it is in affluent south Delhi.

Since marketeers at the recently-launched *Business and Political Observer* (BPO) found that the combined sale of three existing business dailies was around 1.6 lakh, it is trying to expand the constituency. "We are also aiming at people who should read a business paper but generally don't," says Pradeep Sarkar, executive vice-president of Observer India Ltd.

The awareness that news needs to be packaged differently for different classes of people has led to the launch of new media 'products'. Result: the move into the long neglected Hindi Sunday market. Both *The Sunday Observer* and *Sunday Mail* have come up with Hindi editions. Observer executives claim that the less-than-a-year-old Hindi *Sunday Observer* has already surpassed its English edition in circulation at 1.20 lakh (budgeted advertisement revenue: Rs 53 lakh). *Sunday Mail*'s Hindi edition, the company claims, has a circulation of 1.5 lakh. *The Times of India* also relaunched its ailing *Dinaman* magazine as the Sunday newspaper *Dinaman Times*. It now claims weekly sales of over a lakh.

Clearly, there is an increasing willingness to look at a newspaper as a brand. Says Deepak Shourie, group general manager of Living Media India Ltd (publishers of INDIA TODAY): "A brand offers assurance of quality and consistency." This can be seen in the launch of regional language editions of the magazine, the videomagazine *(Newstrack)*, music cassettes *(Music Today)*, and other spin-offs like diaries.

There is also a new slickness in the selling of newspapers. For its launch, BPO presented copies to passengers of all flights originating from Delhi. INDIA

New-look *Economic Times* and *Business and Political Observer*; *India Today* goes multi-lingual; new *Weekly*

THE NEW CULTURE

- Marketing whiz-kids help shape newspapers, traditionally the editor's domain.
- Slick, expensive advertisement/promotion campaigns push periodicals.
- Talk of brand positioning and marketing niches abounds.
- Marketing budgets are on the up and up.
- Darwinism enters ad space selling, as TV emerges a competitor.
- Better packaging; colour supplements; lighter reading.
- Big money flows in as top business groups enter the fray.
- Mega brands spawn products—language editions, Sunday papers, video magazines.

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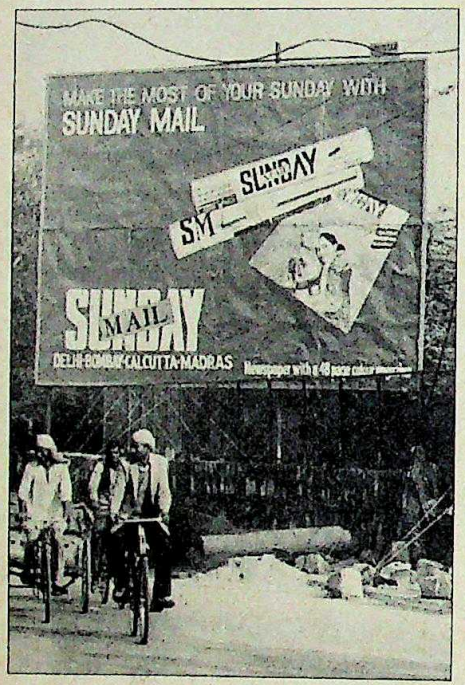
TODAY's regional language editions were launched with a high visibility campaign. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, with a broadsheet supplement, had a special Christmas package—the magazine specially wrapped in a polythene bag with a few freebies like samplers of toothpaste, ear buds and detergent thrown in.

As marketing campaigns get slicker, the old circulation department is on the way out. At Living Media it is called the sales department and at *The Times of India*, it is described as results and market development. Also, with greater emphasis on packaging, *Economic Times* changed to pink newsprint, and rival BPO followed suit. Says Sarkar: "Now I have them in a position where the more they promote pink, the more they promote me." The Express group was spurred to refurbish *Financial Express* and bring out the *Indian Express* Saturday supplement on the more expensive, glazed newsprint.

The problem of image still remains. *Indian Express*, having discovered that its appeal was mostly editorial and that its readers turned to other papers for advertisements, started offering advertisers free space to check response. Says Rajiv Tewari, chief advertising manager: "We have come a long way from selling space to selling response. We are in for a strategic battle now."

And the advertisers are certainly responding. At the Express group, advertisement revenues have nearly doubled to Rs 82 crore in just three years. At the *Times*, the group advertisement revenues have been growing at 25 to 30 per cent a year.

Interestingly, the average advertisement content of dailies has declined over the years—from a high 49 per cent in 1981 to 35 per cent in 1989 in the case of English dailies. Industry sources estimate that only about half of increased advertisement revenues may have come through tariff increases.



Hoardings of *Sunday Mail* and *The Sunday Observer*: competition hots up

BUT *The Hindustan Times*, still refusing to have anything to do with the marketing whiz-kids, continues to register a whopping growth in circulation and revenues in Delhi. According to company claims, its circulation stood at 3.23 lakh at the end of June 1990, an increase from 2.80 lakh a year ago. The group advertisement revenue also jumped from Rs 47.90 crore in 1988-89 to Rs 66.43 crore in 1989-90.

One reason for the new-found marketing awareness in the media business is the increased competition in the industry. Another factor might be television, which took away a big chunk of the advertising pie forcing the print media to innovate. Between 1984 and 1990 press advertising grew about two and half times to Rs 975 crore while TV advertising jumped nearly nine times to Rs 255 crore.

The marketing savvy is backed by some real big money. The Observer group, funded by the Ambanis, splurged Rs 1.5 crore on BPO's launch, including a Rs 90-lakh TV advertisement campaign. *Sunday Mail* spent about Rs 40 lakh on promotion during its relaunch last year under Sanjay Dalmia. Magazines in the south are adopting a different strategy: purchase the readership. Example: the Tamil weekly *Ananda Vikatan* is giving away Rs 10 lakh as prize money in a contest for readers and advertisement agencies on the occasion of its diamond jubilee. Its rival *Kungumam* is offering a plot of land in Madras in a raffle of sorts for its readers.

At *The Times of India* the marketing budget has doubled in the last three years. And the *Express* employs 33 executives in Delhi alone, up from just nine only two years ago to procure advertisements and develop sales. Most of the marketeers are MBAs with experience in consumer goods industry.

Market-thinking is spreading across to the editorial as well. Says Satish Menon, marketing manager with *Sunday Mail*: "Newspapers today are marketing-driven rather than editorial-driven." Marketing executives now participate in shaping the personality of the publication, the traditional domain of the editor. Says *The Times of India* Editor Dileep Padgaonkar: "The old idea that the editor knows best is no longer true. We benefit by the inputs from the marketing department." Adds Chandan Mitra, editor of *The Sunday Observer*: "Marketing has helped in better packaging but has not affected editorial content."

Not everybody is sanguine about the business-turn newspapers have taken. Cautions former editor S. Nihal Singh: "It is dangerous if it makes the editor subservient to marketing people. Only the editor can give a personality to the paper."

In the new scheme of things, such views appear puritanical. The newspapers have now to reckon with the fluctuations and tensions of the tawdry market-place. —ALOK TIWARI

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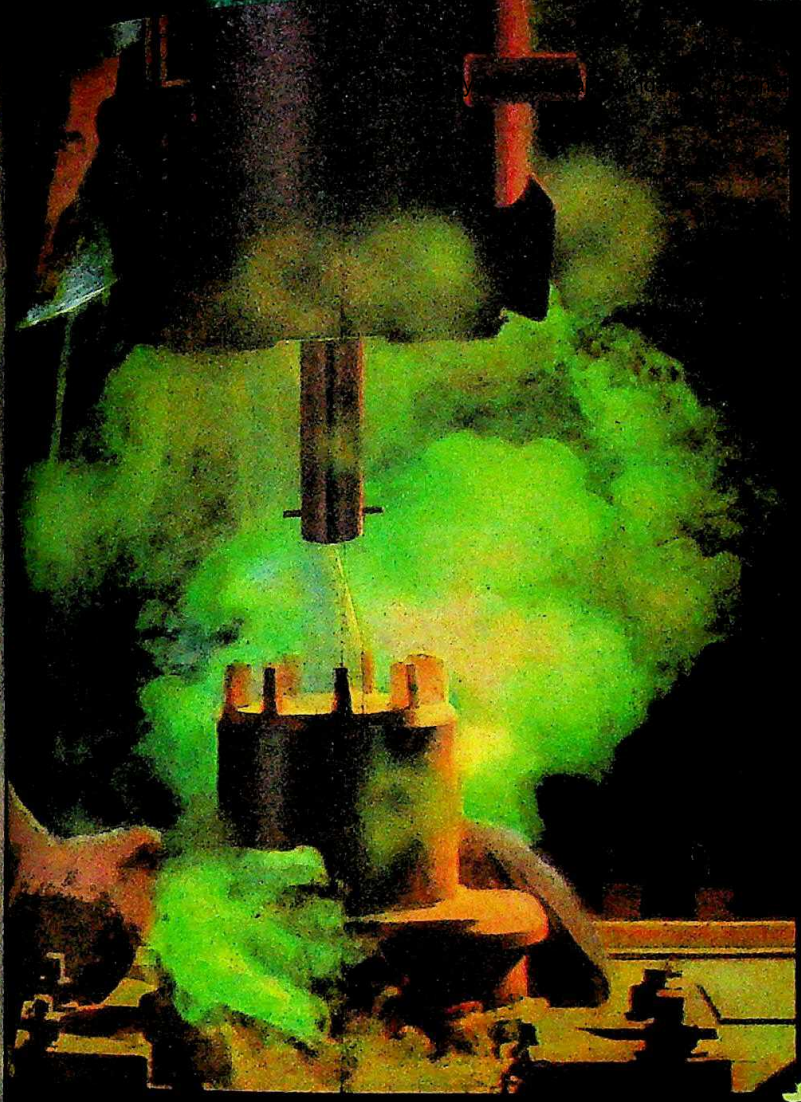

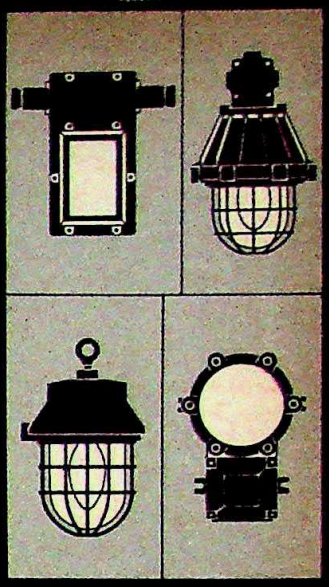

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Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Jerusalem

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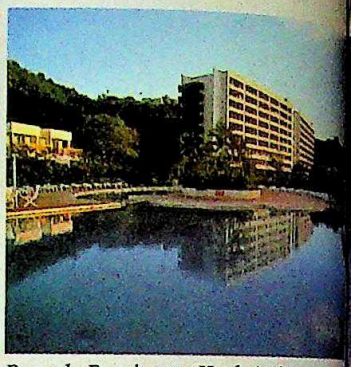
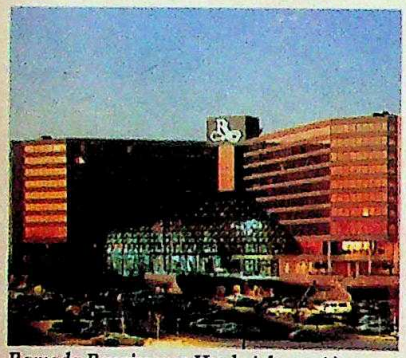
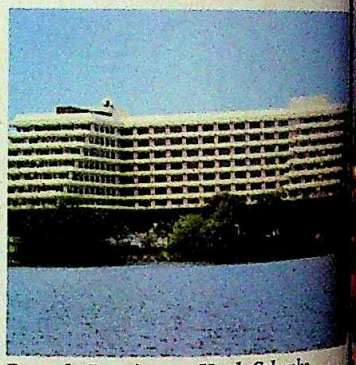


Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Antigua



Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Atlanta Airport

Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Geneva



Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Colombo

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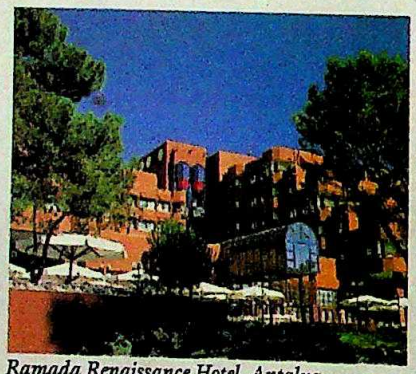
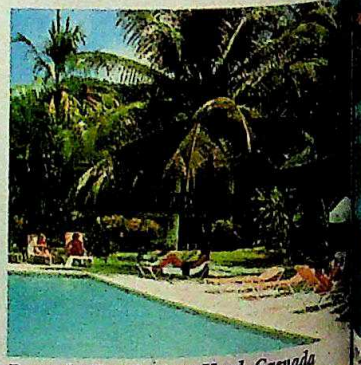


Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Antalya



Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Grenada

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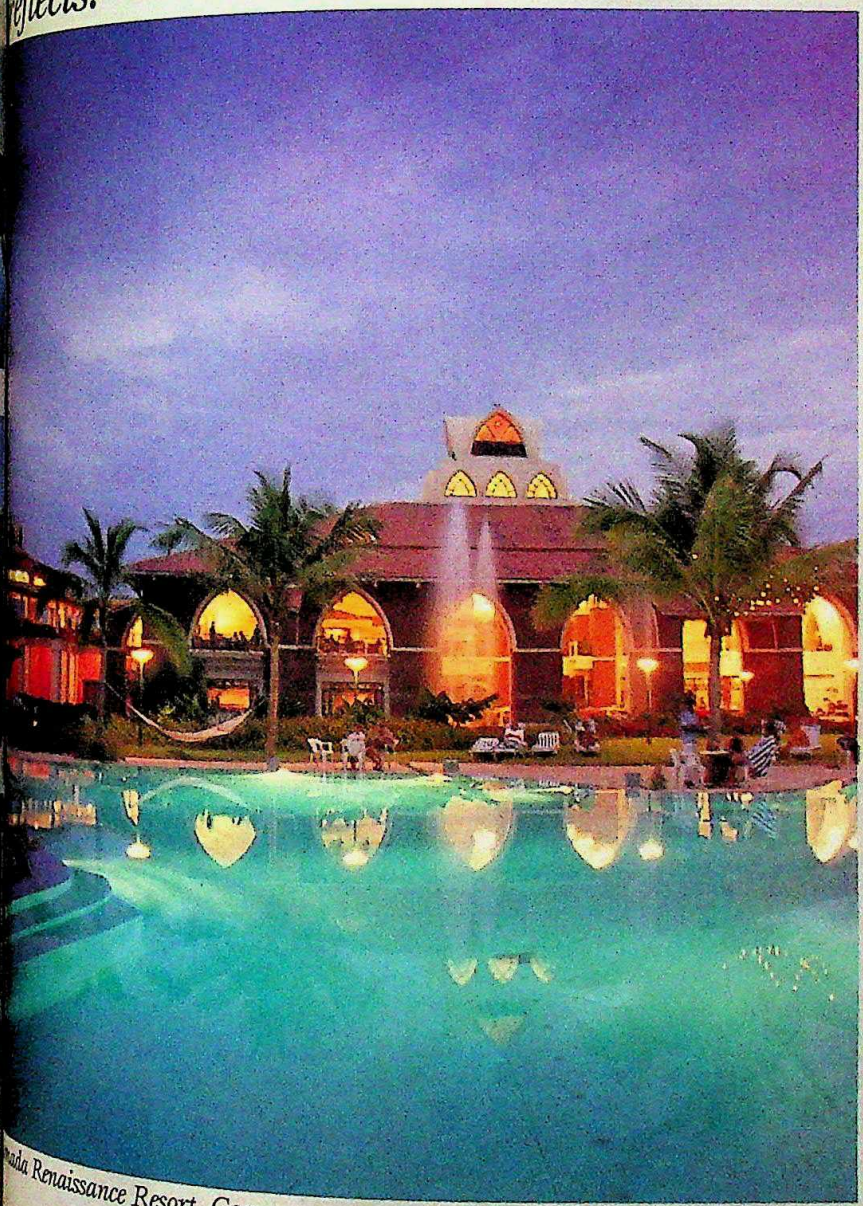
Good breeding reflects.



Ramada Renaissance Resort, Goa

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Ramada Renaissance Resort. An architectural masterpiece? An epicure's paradise? An adventurer's mecca? A luxurious country club?

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RAMADA RENAISSANCE RESORT, GOA

Fine art for finer pleasures

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Bestsellers

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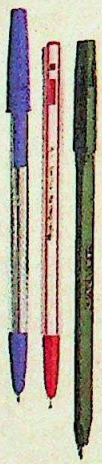
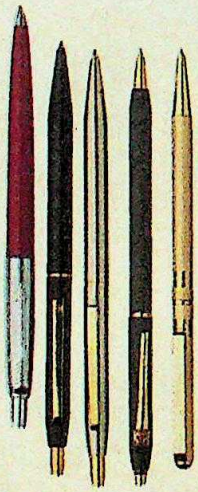
Pilot Hi-Tecpoint 05 by Luxor.

BALL POINT PENS



Plastic barrels:
Left to Right:
Ranger, Monami
and Trendy.

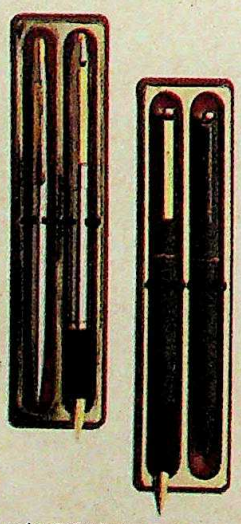


Metal barrels:
Left to Right: Jotter, Crola,
Sterling, Chrismatic and Goldline.

MARKERS

Left to Right: Luxor Excel
2-in-1 Marker, Monami
Oil Magic Twin Dual Marker,
Excel Metal Body Permanent
Marker in fine (bullet)
and broad (chisel) tips.

GIFT SETS



Left to Right: Sterling and Vintage.
Also available gift set
of Crola.

CHILDREN'S RANGE

Left to Right:
Luxor Disney Funset
Colour Pen,
Luxor Bambino Colourset Pen,
Disney Inoxcolour Plastic Crayons,
Luxor Donald Duck Magicset Colour Pen,
Luxor Sign Pen,
Luxor Mickey Mouse Sketch Pen
and Luxor Colour Pen.

MICROTIP/ FINE WRITING PENS

Left to Right: Hi-Roller,
Finewriter,
Graphic 05
and Stylo microtip.

HILITERS

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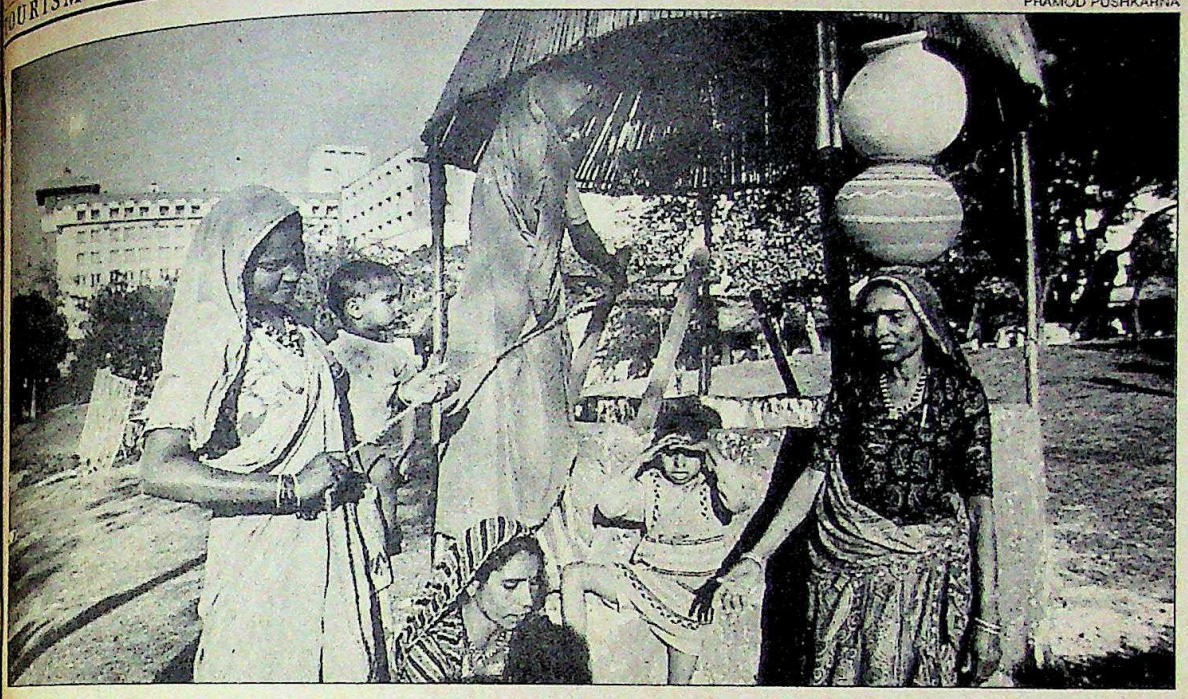


Rural ambience at Hotel Ashok

TOURISM MINISTRY

Rural Overtures

Tau plans rustic attractions to lure tourists

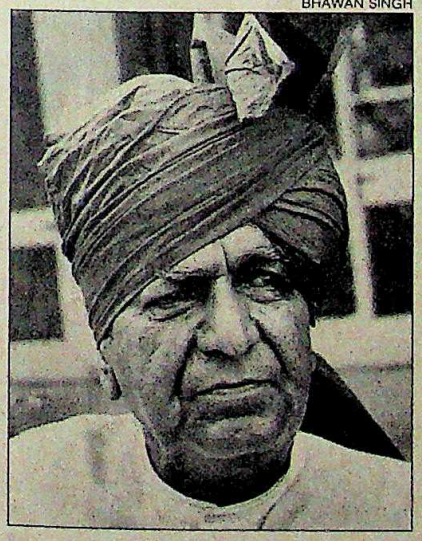
COWS and buffaloes taking a leisurely stroll in the five-star splendour of the capital's Ashok Hotel? Hold your horses, this is just the beginning. There's more to come. Soon the glitzy hotel environs will also have women drawing water from a well. Jhoolas hanging from tree branches. Thatched huts with cowdung-pasted walls. Charpoys thrown casually in the lawns. *Makki ki roti* and *saag* cooked in clay ovens and served in thalis. And for all the tipplers there'll even be a *theka* for drinks.

Chaupal, the restaurant with a rural ambience, will be part of the Government's new 'go rural' thrust for 1991, Visit India Year. Needless to say, the idea is the brainwave of Devi Lal, the man at the helm of the Tourism Ministry. And why not, asks the Tau? Considering over 70 per cent of Indians are ruralites. Officials in his ministry aren't disagreeing either. Their argument for going rural: foreign tourists who come to India on a voyage of discovery always complain that the metropolitan culture of Delhi and Bombay was not what they flew thousands of miles to see; they want to see the real India.

And the real India is what the Tourism Ministry is all set to give them.

But, the foreigners aren't the only ones being wooed. Even ruralites are being encouraged to move out of their dusty hamlets and head for the cities. In fact, fairs and festivals—set in an all-rural ambience—are being conceived with the idea of pushing ruralites beyond their tehsil headquarters. The ultimate aim: the big city slick and the rural hick rub shoulders at the same festivals.

BHAWAN SINGH



Devi Lal is going ahead with his plans to sell rural India.

Among the attractions that have been sold to Devi Lal are the Nagore Cattle Fair, the Saharanpur Mango Festival and the Desert Festival. What officials forgot to tell the Tau was that some of these festivals are old hat, being annual features. Apparently, Devi Lal was more than impressed that there can actually be something like a mango festival celebrating "the most delicious fruit on earth". He was also quite hooked on the cattle fair—being sold as a great tourist attraction—where a stupendous 2,00,000 cattle, camels and horses are bought and sold by some 80,000 farmers.

Another thing officials seem to have glossed over in their brief to their 'honourable minister' was the all-important fact that in the past these so-called attractions have almost always been flops. This is because mangoes and cows were certainly not what the foreign tourist had in mind when he thought of the real India.

But the Tau is going full steam ahead with his plans to sell rural India. For one, he plans to make the fairs and festivals—47 are scheduled for this year itself—open to artisan and craftsmen from all over the country. Earlier festivals tended to attract craftsmen just from the states they were held in.

Along with the outward movement of the ruralites, the new scheme

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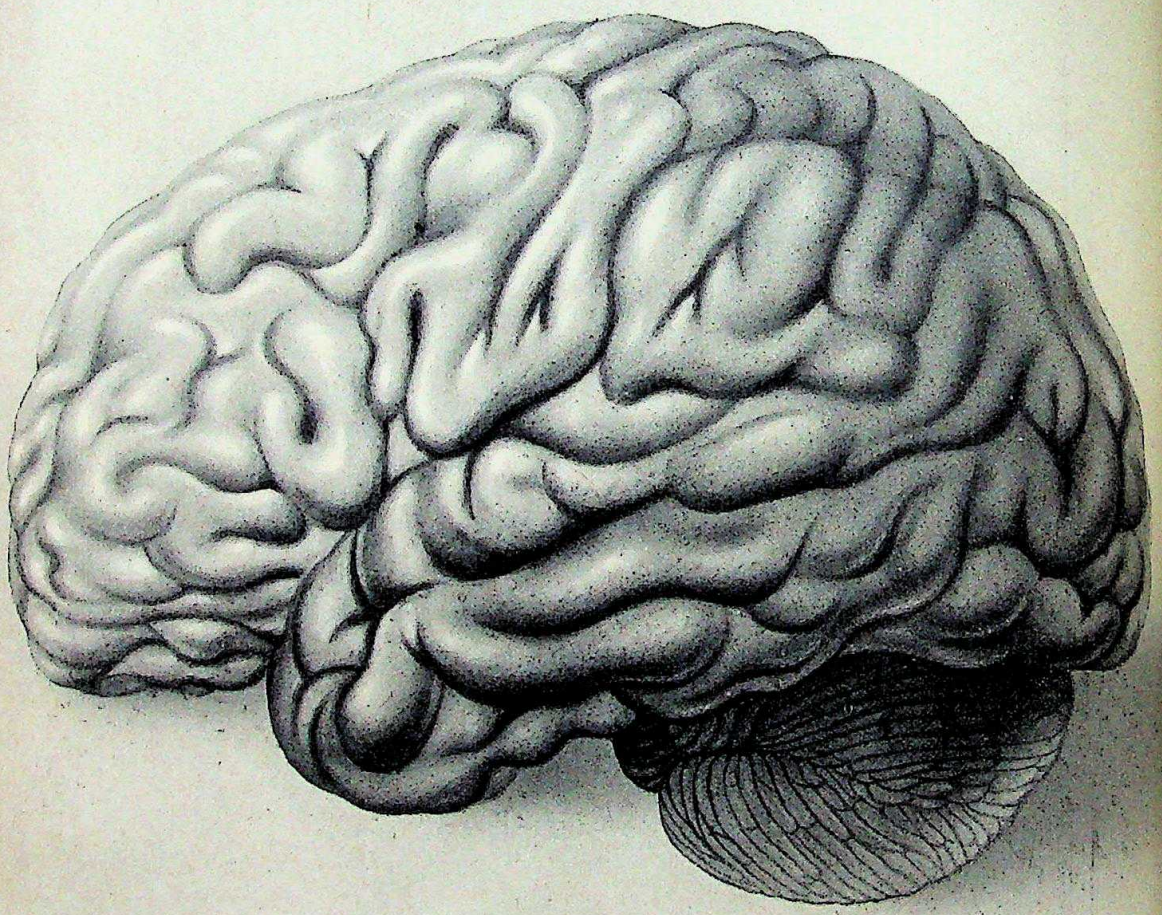

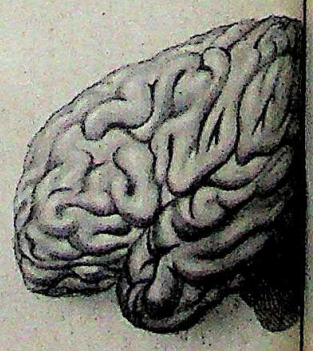

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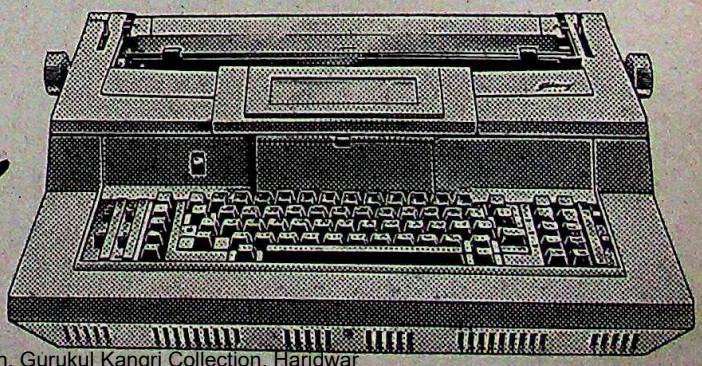

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SO MUCH TALENT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.

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has plans of a reverse movement as well—urbanites and foreigners will be taken right to the villagers' doorstep. Last fortnight, in a bid to draw tourists into rural India, the Tourism Ministry created another category of hotels called Heritage Hotels. Under this, traditional homes owned by the landed gentry will be converted into hotels. Such buildings, generally built before 1950, have a "rustic charm", as a ministry official put it. Says he: "The emphasis will be on traditional hospitality and ambience. This scheme will also go a long way in maintaining our cultural heritage as a lot of buildings are in a state of disrepair."

Though at the drawing-board stage as yet, the ministry expects many owners of havelis, forts and castles to come forward for the scheme. An added incentive is the fact that they will be given tax subsidies—apart from the fact that the ministry will help fund the new hotels. Says an official: "Devi Lal hopes that the hotels will help generate employment in rural areas."

In fact, generation of employment opportunities is the reason for the special incentives to hotels at places of pilgrimage, rural areas, and to resorts at a height of above 3,000 feet. All such establishments will be exempt from expenditure tax for a period of 10 years and they will also be given a 50 per cent income tax rebate. Sixty government-run highway resorts have been sanctioned for this year. Says an official: "Not only will villagers get jobs as waiters and cooks, but nearby poultry and milk shops will also profit as the resorts will buy their products locally."

Meanwhile, all ITDC hotels and restaurants have already opened their doors to ruralites after Devi Lal announced that 'dhoti-kurta' attired folk be given a 50 per cent discount on food at five-star hotels. Certainly a far cry from the days when Devi Lal came down heavily on the *ayyashi ke adde*—as he described five-star hotels—even threatening to open cement godowns in their place.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

DUTY-FREE SHOPS

Bonanza for Buyers

THERE'S good news for the compulsive shopper. Now he won't have to head for the duty-free at the London airport for his bottle of Chanel No. 5 or Dubai for his two-in-one. Come summer, Bombay and Delhi will join the ranks of London, Frankfurt, Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore, if the grandiose scheme floated by the Civil Aviation Minister, Harmohan Dhawan, takes off. Says Dhawan: "Everything available in good airports of the world should also be available here."

The plan envisages floating global tenders to invite international companies to build attractive retail outlets in the airports and use their market expertise to boost sales. Presently only about 5 per cent of a total 8.22 million passengers passing through Indian airports buy from the duty-free shops. The average sale per passenger at Indian airports is a mere $10, while the world average per passenger is about $30 and the average Japanese spends $230.

If Dhawan plans to lure Indian buyers with foreign labels, V.K. Mathur, chairman of the International Airports Authority of India (IAAI) seems inclined to promote "the best that India has to offer". So, along with Scotts, the Singapore-based airport merchandising company with a turnover of over $500 million, Khazana, the Indian up-market shopping arcade chain has also been invited to make presentations.

ITDC duty-free shop at IGI Airport

Apart from getting foreign exchange normally spent in airports outside the country, the duty-free shops will inject a sense of competition especially for ITDC which has had a monopoly. Despite being in the business for over two decades, it has a mere 0.5 per cent share in the global duty-free market of over $2,600 million. Intriguingly, ITDC hasn't been invited to make a presentation.

Meanwhile, A.V. Ganesan, secretary in the Ministry of Civil Aviation, sees the scheme as an added source of revenue for the IAAI, which so far has been exclusively dependent on landing and parking charges. Says Mathur: "Airports the world over earn 30 to 40 per cent of their income from duty-free shops. In India shoppers account for only 3 per cent of our total earnings." If the new plan comes through, the IAAI will earn between $25 million and $30 million per year.

But if the IAAI gets only the rent and royalty on sales in foreign exchange from the foreign merchandising company, what happens to the rest of the foreign exchange earned? Does the merchandising company get to repatriate all of it, or will it be allowed to take out only a part of it? Moreover, will ITDC, which has now entered into a tie-up with Hiene-mann—a Hamburg-based airport merchandising company—be allowed to bid for the tender?

These hurdles have obviously to be cleared before the arcades come up. And bureaucrats in the ministry are hoping that the concept of glitzy duty-free shopping in India will finally take wing.

—W.P.S. SIDHU

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Philips Lighting

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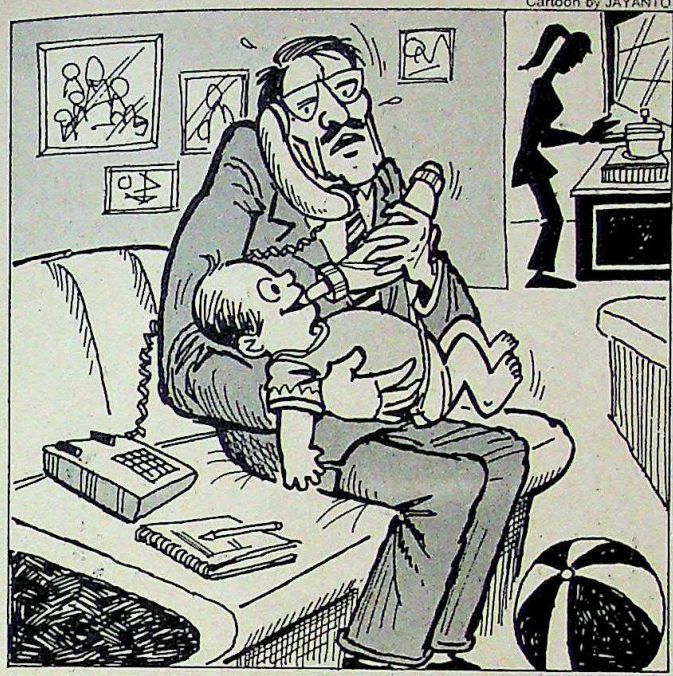

INDIAN MALES

Dutiful Daddies

Increasingly, fathers pitch in to help

IN the West, Post-Feminist Man has long prided himself on having transformed the traditional role of the father. From a remote, authoritarian figure who emerged from the shadows occasionally to dispense periodic punishment to a fully involved partner in the business of childbirth, nappy-changing, feeding (analysts say some over-enthusiastic dads even resent not being able to breast-feed), and all the other responsibilities of parenthood.

These men boasted of being "real fathers" instead of the type who turned up at the maternity ward with a bottle of champagne, handed around cigars, left to get drunk with the boys and abandoned the wife to deal with the squealing, colic-ridden little bundle they had both produced.

Some of the claims of the Post-Feminist Dad about his achievements, however, were a little too grand. Speak to their wives and you often find an irritation with their husbands' perpetual self-congratulation at doing things which a woman automatically does a hundred times a day without expecting a word of praise. But the little fellows deserve top marks for trying to reconstruct themselves in a better mould, whatever their shortcomings may be.

Increasingly, the young Indian male is also jumping onto the bandwagon of New Fatherhood. He's a reformed character. He goes to the gynaecologist with his wife, gives up smoking, joins her in pre-natal breathing exercises, holds her hand while she gives birth and anxiously monitors every stage of his offspring's development. He's not bothered that some of his more Neanderthal mates might call him a wimp when he starts discussing Dr Spock. Or the lotion best suited for nappy rash.

Last fortnight, Bombay's Breach Candy Hospital reported that fathers were present during 80 per cent of childbirths. Says gynaecologist Usha Rahna, who works at the hospital: "The number of men interested in witnessing the process of childbirth has quadrupled in the past two years."

Among the middle classes, it seems, hardly anyone subscribes to Ernest Hemingway's macho dictum: "To be a successful father, there is one absolute rule: don't even look at your kid for the first two years."

Many men are finding that the opposite is true. Bombay-based computer specialist Ashish Khosla says that ever since his photographer wife Urmila gave birth, he has made it a point to reach home early: "The growing years of a child are fascinating and I don't want to miss any of it."

Advertising executive Rajan Nair says the decision to have a child was a joint one, therefore "it is as much my responsibility as hers to look after the child. And I've had no problems. In fact it's been great fun." Nair is relieved that he hasn't ended up with the regrets of Amit Daswani, a Bombay-based accountant, who hardly spent any time with his child in her formative years: "I feel guilty and left out. When my daughter comes in from school, she rushes into her mother's arms and they have a conspiratorial chat about what happened at school."

The wives of the New Fathers are not complaining. When Uma Krishnan, a Madras banker, is out of town on work, her husband copes admirably with bathing, dressing, feeding and playing camel to daughter Shreya's mahout. "We don't believe in the traditional role-splitting that says that the mother does this and the father does that. Whoever happens to be home takes care of the baby."

Even advertising companies are being commissioned to carry out research by their clients to discover the characteristics of this exotic creature. Companies want to find out what products fathers like to buy for their offspring to help them market their goods better. Raymonds, for example, who dress the upmarket man, are targeting young fathers. The chain recently ran advertisements showing a man lovingly cradling a baby instead of pawing a scantily-clad siren. And Little Kingdom, a children's shop, sends letters to fathers reminding them of their child's birthday and offering a discount during the birthday week.

But the New Father can sometimes find the constraints of an orthodox environment hard to overcome. Quite often, the man's mother discourages him from poking his nose into a "feminine" domain. Says lawyer Rahul Kadam: "The underlying assumption is that men can't be sensitive. I had trouble convincing my mother that I wanted to be with my wife when she was delivering."

Some of this enlightened behaviour can be explained by sheer economic necessity in urban families, where the woman works full-time, child-care is almost non-existent, and the support of the extended family is not available. In these circumstances, help from the husband is crucial in keeping the family running.

The men who make an effort to shed their traditional role in order to become more emotionally involved in their children's lives usually find that they enrich their own personalities in the process. Clearly, the traditional image of the family patriarch is a thing of the past. Ascribe it to feminism or socio-economic compulsions, Indian males are definitely beginning to share the agony and ecstasy of parenthood.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

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Immigrant Eye

Indians in the US tracked

AN IMMIGRANT SUCCESS STORY
East Indians in America
by ARTHUR W. HELWEG and
USHA M. HELWEG
University of Pennsylvania Press
Price: Not stated; Pages: 297

READ the literature flooding the market on Asian immigrants in the West and one fact is clear. The image of the docile immigrant of old is being replaced by that of an assertive, educated Asian, as keen to correct misconceptions of himself as he is to succeed in his new home.

An Immigrant Success Story is one such work which focuses exclusively on Asian immigrants—but doesn't analyse their new milieu. You will hear immigrants talking of the freedom which American society offers women, the opportunities for hard-working entrepreneurs and their disappointment at the (relative) absence of both in India. However, what is unmentioned is the other reality—tension between the Asian immigrant and minority groups such as blacks in the labour market and the glass ceiling that bars the Asian Indian executives from reaching the top of the corporate sector and the international agencies. There is only a passing reference to the ignorance of the educated American about cultures different from his own.

What is brought out is the split level existence of the new immigrant in American society. For instance, apart from Jackson Heights, New York, Indian immigrants in the US do not live the ghettoised existence of their counterparts in Britain. This is because of the vast opportunities in the US and the combination of education and self-confidence which makes it possible for them to enter the American workforce at a reasonably high level.

But outside their workplace—and in the case of the self-employed even within it—immigrants have created their own little Indias. The executive in the pin-striped suit relaxes at home in his kurta pyjama and sits down with his family for an Indian meal. He spends evenings with his countrymen at 'pot luck' parties where the women gossip, the men talk politics (Indian usually) and both watch Indian films on video. At the same time there is a perceptible change. The parties are larger, the relationships more impersonal, and, importantly, baseball vies with Indian films for video time.

Goals too are different. The Indian student who came to the US in the '60s had visions of returning to India. Many did. Today's student aspires for career enhancement and money. He often remains in the US.

Certainly, this is a book which puts together some interesting vignettes on the life of new immigrants in the US and on the dilemmas they face when they return home. Sometimes though, the sketches, because of frequent repetition, lose some of their flavour.

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

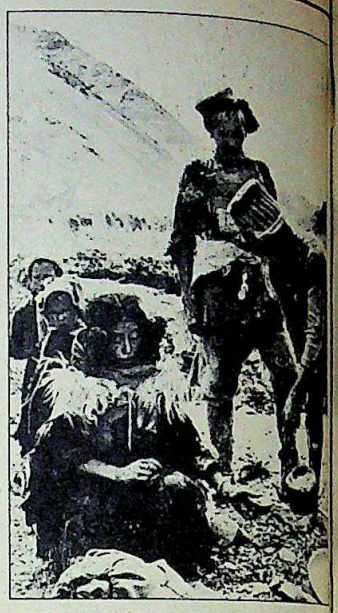
On a High

A paean to Manali

AT HOME IN THE HIMALAYAS
by CHRISTINA NOBLE
Collins; Distributed by Rupa & Co
Price: Rs 355; Pages: 210

MANALI proper is so contemptibly familiar to so many of us, that we thought there was nothing new to say. Till Christina Noble rode in, cheque-book and enthusiasm blazing and transformed the inscrutable Kulluis, Tibetans, Ladakhis, Lahulis and Zanskaris into human beings once more. Yeowoman service, this is.

Lest this sound glacial and ungenerous, let it be known that Noble was never nobbled by a Caucasian lack of sympathy for the "locals", some of whom are part and parcel of her tour agency that operates from Manali. She loves them all, including pranksters, hicks, dedicated employees, the children debilitated by malnutrition and consumption, the hardened boozers drunk on *chang* and *arak*. Her initial forays into the hills, beginning August 1970, were fraught with primal xenophobia, but after July 1971 her tour agency began hiring so many locals that she cut a swathe through the



Zanskaris drinking *chang*

opposition or bought it over. There was no looking back after this.

Unfortunately for gentle Noble, her employees were only human: they erred, brought her grief but were speedily forgiven their transgressions. This affection is sometimes so irritatingly cloying that veracity clunks.

Noble immersed herself in the local traditions. Rejuvenation was done four months in a year at Argyll in Scotland, when tourist traffic in Manali went into hibernation. Back home with mom and croissants, she would be raring to return to India, crawl the hills, lead gawking tourists and the odd lapidarist over loose screes and mind-boggling glaciers. The Himalayas are not genial and leading a trek over precipitous terrain requires the gall and stamina of a mountain goat. Noble had it, and the locals learnt to treat this demented *firang jhule* with distant but genuine respect.

Noble, however, is completely ignorant about the politics of the region and that's a wonder, given that various radical grassroots groups and development agencies are turning the area topsy-turvy. All she says, rather naively, is that communism has taken place in Manali and its surrounds.

This is a competent book but with no pretensions to literary genius. It is not revelatory either but has obviously been written to ensure that memories of Manali's pristine charm remain. The hills, unfortunately, are dying. A decade more, and Noble may well have to go back to the unspoilt charm of Argyll.

—KAJAL [illegible]

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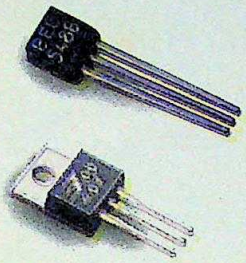

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Survival Snafu

MAN's protracted attempts to preserve species on the verge of extinction have seriously backfired in the Karera sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.

The grasslands of Karera were declared a sanctuary in 1981 when the Great Indian Bustard population in the area came down to 14. Ensconced in the safety of the sanctuary, the bustard population flourished and doubled to 30 in the mid-'80s. Last year, however, environmentalists were shocked to find the number down to 14 again. Baffled, they began to look for possible reasons for this phenomenon.

One explanation is that encroachment by the nearby villagers on the grasslands has scared the bustard away from these areas. But the more plausible reason is the competition that the bustard is getting from the black buck, also endangered, inhabiting the Karera sanctuary.

In 1981 the black buck numbered just over 100. Today, there are over 2,000 in the area. Their growing number has complicated the bustard's battle for survival.

In a bid to save both the endangered species, an attempt was made to relocate the black buck in Shivpuri National Park, about 70 km from Karera. But the plan failed to take off.

A proposal to cull the population of buck in the sanctuary is considered feasible but far too controversial. Yet another obvious move would be to prevent encroachment of villagers.

But even as the authorities debate the course of action, the two species continue their subtle battle for survival in the Karera grasslands.

ASHISH KOTHARI

Indian Bustard: dwindling population

Hot Debate

THE greenhouse effect has been a subject of hot debate. But a recent report by the Washington-based World Resources Institute (WRI) listing Brazil, China and India among the top five countries with the most greenhouse emissions has raised many eyebrows.

Alarmed by the report holding developing nations collectively responsible for 48 per cent of the carbon dioxide and 56 per cent of methane in the atmosphere, the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), decided to study WRI's data. In *Global Warming in an Unequal World*, Anil Aggarwal and Sunita Narain, showed that developing countries contributed only 16 per cent of the carbon dioxide and none of the methane accumulated in the atmosphere. Aggarwal charges WRI with mathematical jugglery with regard to the 'natural sink' (ability of the earth's environment to absorb greenhouse gases). He says that the WRI has distributed this 'sink' among different countries according to the amount of greenhouse gases they produce while, in fact, population should be the criterion. Thus, India, with a population 3.4 times that of the US, is given a share of 'sink' much smaller than that of the US.

Hence, CSE considers the US, the USSR, Brazil, Canada and Germany the top greenhouse guilty. Clearly, the debate on the greenhouse emitters is hotting up.

The reports: divergent findings

Turning Turtle

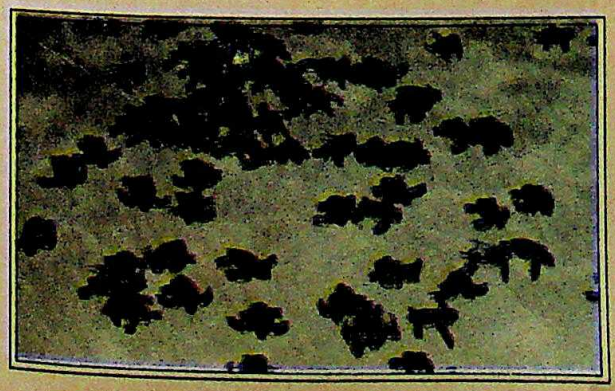
NICKNAMED the 'turtle walkers', a core group of 15 zoology students from a Madras college go on their 12-km-long nightly ambulations along the city coastline in December-March to collect eggs of the endangered Ridley turtle. The eggs are then relocated in a hatchery. When hatchlings emerge, they are released into the sea. The aim is to check the rapidly dwindling turtle population.

The female Ridley comes ashore every year to lay her eggs on the beach and then waddles back into the ocean, forsaking the eggs.

Over the years, poachers, usually fishermen, collected the eggs either to sell (they are much cheaper than chicken eggs) or for a meal. Some of the unhatched eggs also fell prey to predatory crabs or stray dogs. Consequently, the Ridley population fell dramatically. Conservationists estimate that there were at least 100 nests along every kilometre of the Madras coastline in the early '70s but today there are hardly 10.

The efforts of the turtle walkers, officially called the Students' Sea Turtle Conservation Network, in the last two years have certainly brought about an awareness among the local population but may not have reversed the creature's languorous crawl towards extinction.

—W.P.S. SIDHU



Ridley turtle: endangered

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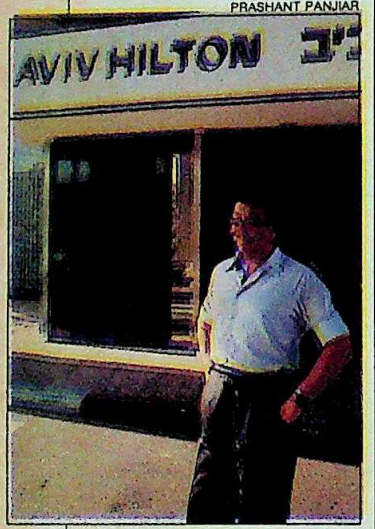
Fine Overtures

◆ It was one of those now-or-never moments. **Zubin Mehta** changing planes in Paris saw an aircraft bound for Tel Aviv. Switching more than directions, Mehta, hopped on board. Wherever the Scuds landed there he was with the Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahatf. "What's important is that I am not Jewish and I am here. For Israelis a non-Jew coming to them in this crisis is a morale-booster." Mehta also carries a bit of India with him. He addresses the Israeli ministers as '*Minister Sahib*' and carries red *mirchis* to spice his meals.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Zubin: changing direction

In a Man's World

◆ She's certainly no playgirl. But for the moment she's taken charge of the fantasies of the Indian male. *Debonair*, India's answer to *Playboy*, has a new executive editor, and it's **Amrita Shah** who has resigned from *The Independent* to play our very own Christina Hefner. However, without a Daddy Dearest in tow. There's no cause for alarm though. The nudes will nither disapppear nor go undercover. Says Shah: "*Debonair* will still be a leisure magazine. I plan to retain the nudes—it's just that the photographs will now be far more aesthetically appealing." Apparently a cover-up job has started: female forms—the centrespread apart—are already, well, better dressed. Perhaps, the time for male bunnies is finally here.

Amrita: new aesthetics

Seeking Happiness

◆ **The subject of orgasm has come out from under wraps in India. And quite respectably. The First International Conference on Orgasm opens in Delhi this fortnight. Congress(I) MP Vasant Sathe will cut the tape. Mulk Raj Anand will open the Exhibition Erotica. Pandit Ravi Shankar will release the Souvenir. Says Sathe: "Beautiful sex is the essence of a happy life. In India this is important. We need happiness." Right on, Mr Sathe, *Mera Bharat Mahan.***

Cartoon by JAYANTO

Age no Bar

◆ This two-year-old is babe in the woods. He's bee behind bars—though bare out of his diapers. Arreste with his father while watc ing Ayodhya activists co arrest, **Gitanshu Chop** spent 14 days in prison. Wh a separate challan by th Ghaziabad police the boy e joyed the status of a fu fledged prisoner. But not co to take things lying down. h has filed a petition in th Allahabad High Court de manding a compensatio of Rs 2 lakh for his 'illeg detention. High time the po lice began using their bra along with their fists. Perha what they need are gla Or else we'll soon have Toddler's Rights Group.

Gitanshu: seeking justic

The Swinging Sensation

◆ With his Omar Shariff-eyes and a voice that should send Amitabh Bachchan gargling, **Shahbaaz Khan** had them swooning as Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan's father, in the tele-serial. Even grey and grizzled his popularity did not wane. Now he's discarded his grey wig and with dancing shoes on, he's the latest entrant to tinsel town for S. Subash's film *Nachne Gaanewale*. He plays a *bhand* (court jester) from the wrong side of the road, who graduates to become a pop singer and, needless to say, wins all the gals. Tele-stars usually become falling stars when they move to the big screen galaxy: Krishna (Nitish Bhardwaj) proved a tele-god who landed with clay feet on the big screen. But Khan is not deterred. Confidently he declared: "I'm India's answer to Dustin Hoffman and Anthony Quinn." Well, at least he can do the Zorba dance, that is if he's not playing *Tootsie*.

Shahbaaz Khan: storming tinsel town

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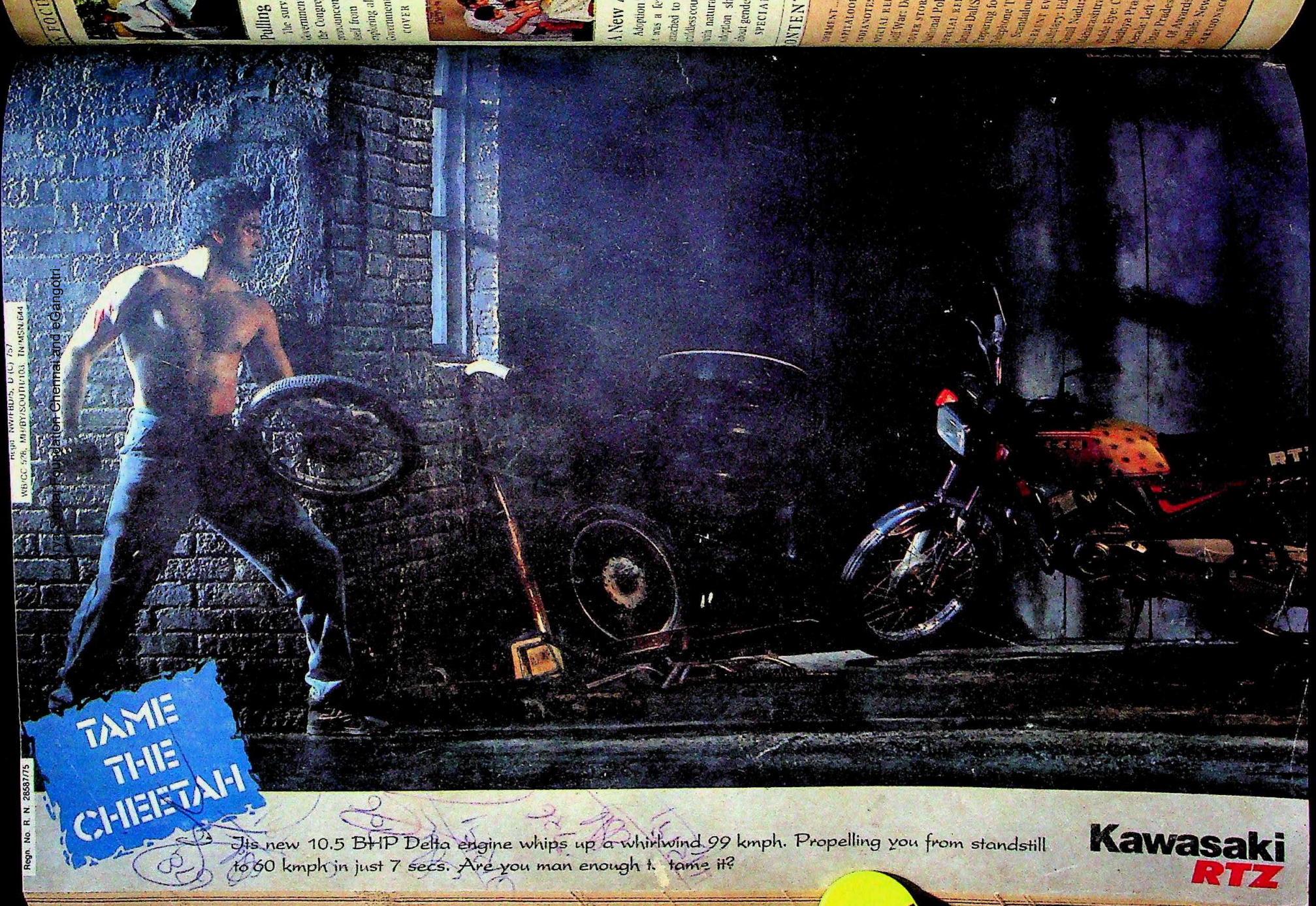

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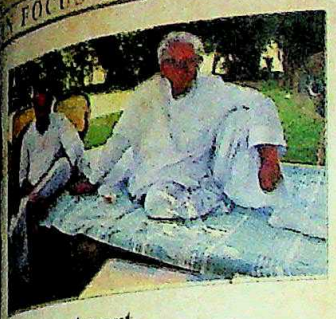


Pulling Apart

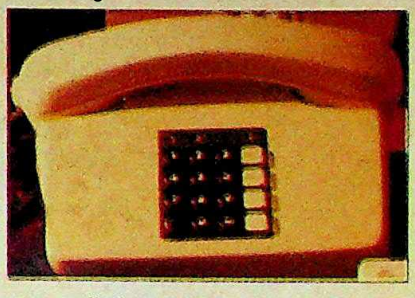
The survival of the Chandra Shekhar Government is under increasing threat. The Congress(I), as is clear from recent pronouncements, has begun to distance itself from the Janata Dal(S). It is now exploring all possible ways of forming the Government, and avoiding elections.

COVER STORY 32

Devastating Fall-out

As the war in the Gulf continues to rage with devastating effect, INDIA TODAY spoke to those who had managed to get out of Iraq to get a first-hand account of the ravages of the incessant aerial bombing. Also an analysis of the long-term fall-out in the region of the present war.

SPECIAL REPORT 22



Scandalous Revelations

The still-secret report by the CBI on telephone tapping, ordered by V.P. Singh after Chandra Shekhar alleged that his phone was bugged, contains shocking details of tapping that had been ordered by Congress(I) governments under both Rajiv Gandhi and Mrs Gandhi.

SPECIAL REPORT 46

A New Acceptability

Adoption is no longer the anathema that it was a few years ago. As the stigma attached to it vanishes, more and more childless couples—sometimes even parents with natural children—are going in for adoption shrugging off past prejudices about gender, colour and creed.

SPECIAL FEATURE 85

Dispelling Old Myths

The subject of orgasm came out from under the wraps at the First International Conference on Orgasm in New Delhi last fortnight. Attended by sexology experts from all over the world it shattered old myths about sexuality, and also proved a celebration of love.

LIVING 142

Fatal Attraction

As the Indian environment changes at a rapid pace, the suicide rate is growing alarmingly. Pyschiatrists say that all kinds of factors are contributing to this: classroom pressures, dowry harassment, miserable marriages, the breakdown of the joint family system, unemployment and so on.

SPECIAL FEATURE 134

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THE STEEL INDUSTRY GRINDS TO A HALT!

GIVING A BOOST TO THE

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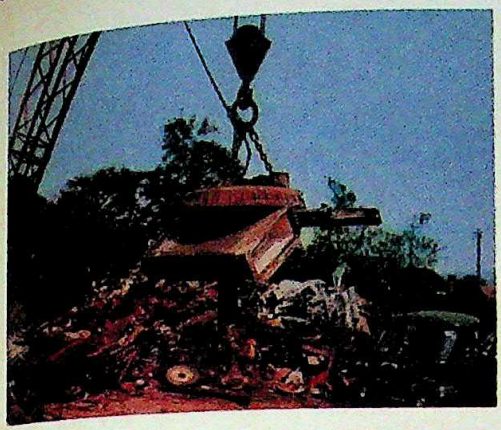

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INDIAN STEEL INDUSTRY

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DUBIOUS DESIGNS

The US claims of initiating conflict in the Gulf merely to protect the interests of Kuwait and other Arab countries now appear to be only skin deep ("Gulf War: Critical Phase," February 15). In fact, the US has its eyes on the long-term economic benefits that it will derive at the end of the war by helping in the economic reconstruction of the region.

Calcutta — N.B. RAO

TAKING SIDES

The tremendous public support enjoyed by Saddam Hussain ("Ready for War," January 31) is reminiscent of the reception given to Adolf Hitler after the annexation of Czechoslovakia and Poland. However, just as Hitler finally faced the bitter reality of defeat, this ephemeral moment of glory will end in bitterness for Saddam and his people too. Like the Germans, the coming generations of Iraqis will also realise the folly of their forefathers.

Bombay — VIJAY D. SAMPAT

■ It is not Saddam Hussain but George Bush who is, in fact, the Adolf Hitler of the '90s. He says he is fighting for the liberation of Kuwait, but what about Palestine? Just for the sake of power and oil, Bush might well have summoned Armageddon.

New Delhi — SAMIR MARX MAHAJAN

■ Patriotism in Iraq is praiseworthy but Saddam Hussain should provide able stewardship and lead the country towards prosperity instead of disaster. Patriotic feelings should not be exploited. Instead of the US-led multinational forces' attack on Iraq the world leaders should try for a peaceful settlement.

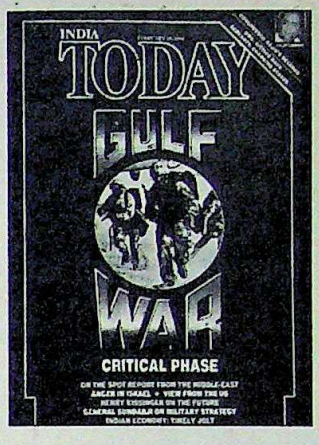
Amritsar — RAGHBIR S. SADHAR

■ The US intervention in the Gulf has once again proved that America is a big bully and has ambitions to dominate the world. There is nothing wrong in Saddam Hussain linking Iraq's occupation of Kuwait with the Palestine issue. America too linked the question of Namibian independence with the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola.

Trichy — MUSTAFA S. LAL

■ Though I praise the Iraqis for their braveness, I entirely blame Saddam Hussain for the present crisis in the Gulf. Now that the powers-that-be on earth have failed to hammer out a peaceful solution and the war has eventually started, it has been left to the power-that-be in heaven to put an end to it.

Gulbarga — K. SREEDHAR



Bonar's Law states: "There is no such thing as inevitable war. If war comes it will be from the failure of human wisdom." The Gulf war is an example of this.

Madurai — D. TAMIZH SELVAN

Saddam Hussain's claim to trace his family roots to Hazrat Ali has no meaning as no follower of Hazrat Ali would do what Saddam has done to Kuwait.

Lucknow — A.H. RIZVI

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UNFLATTERING VIEWS

Subramanian Swamy says that he brings glory to an office ("Mr Embarrassment," January 31). I wonder what glory he brought to the post of professor of economics at Harvard University. The words of Bernard Shaw seem to fit Swamy very aptly: "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach."

Bombay — Dr ARVIND G. BHAGWAT

SHAMEFUL ACT

It is shameful that Om Prakash Chautala resorted to the rule of the jungle to avenge the justice meted out to him by *Newstrack* ("Muzzling the Press", January 31). Even as the rest of the world moves towards freedom and democracy, it is unfortunate that we are regressing towards casteism and dictatorship.

New Delhi — LALIMA ANEJA DANG

■ The tragedy of the political system in this country is that people like Chautala wield power utterly disproportionate to their status and calibre.

Bangalore — R.P. GURPUR

■ Your response to the bully of Haryana should be what Brutus had to say in *Julius Caesar*: "You have done that you should be sorry for.
There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats;
For I am arm'd so strong in honesty,
That they pass by me as the idle wind,
which I respect not....

Chandigarh — R.S. PATHANIA

■ When Chautala and his band
cause mayhem; understand
that Devi(l) and son
aren't merely having fun
They are striving to create Disneyland.

Pune — AVINASH DEODHAR

EXPORT PROBLEMS

In your article on the economy ("Way below Par", January 31) I would like to point out that our exports can be very competitive provided the exporters are able to get the duties and taxes refunded within seven to 10 days of the export. The quality of Indian products is well accepted in the world market and we will be able to compete with giants provided we get the raw material at international prices.

New Delhi — SUNDER T. VACHANI

TRENDY TIMES

It is good news that a fashion revolution is on in Kerala ("Dressing to Design", January 31). But teenagers should

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remember the words of Oscar Wilde: "Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months."
Sonepat KUMARY G. MENON

LESSON NOT TAUGHT

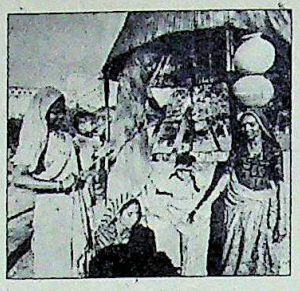
BJP leader Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, who taught V.P. Singh at Allahabad University ("Strident Change", January 31), probably forgot to acquaint his student with Newton's Third Law: every action has an equal and opposite reaction. If he had, Singh would perhaps have realised that Mandal and mandir would have had an equal and opposite reaction.
Bangalore R. JAYARAM

LOPSIDED OUTLOOK

I would like to know when exactly General Sundarji developed a pro-Pakistani sentiment ("Declare Nuclear Status", December 31). Small nations confronted by big bullies send peace feelers to avert a catastrophe. But why did Sundarji send a peace feeler to Pakistan in 1971 when India had scored a victory and destroyed East Pakistan? How could he contemplate carrying out future nuclear development jointly with Pakistan?
England B.R. KURUKSHETRA

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

Your article on the intellectuals ("Neo, Pseudo, Natty", December 31) was interesting. If they have liberated themselves from the smoky coffee houses of the '60s, they are now a dynamic force in the country. If some of them run after the Rockefeller or Ford Foundation for grants, it's because there are few funding agencies in India.
Lesotho M.W. ANSARI



Tau's scheme of giving discount to villagers in ITDC hotels will benefit the rural rich and not the poor. And the landlords do not need discounts.
Trivandrum A. JACOB SAHAYAM

People get senile at 75, so has Tau; Everyone of us has finally found out how; New cultural shock; To ruralites en bloc; What a change to sizzler steaks from bhaji and pao.
Mhow PSEUDONYMOUS AUTUMN

NUMBERS GAME

The team headed by Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar ("Pure Excess", December 31) could be aptly termed a 'mega'stry rather than a 'mini'stry.
Nagpur DR SANJIV THOSAR

BIASED REPORT

Your article on NRIs ("Asking for More," December 31) is totally biased. An example of Indian 'efficiency': I have yet to receive my Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) back to my account in Saudi Arabia, now 11 weeks overdue with Citibank, Bombay, despite the fact that 12 reminders have been sent without eliciting a response. Has the RBI frozen FCNR accounts? Perhaps the majority of NRIs do not withdraw their money so even foreign banks are not geared to repatriate money on time.
Saudi Arabia Dr ANIL MARK DE SOUSA

■ Your statement that the Reserve Bank of India has raised the interest on FCNR is incorrect. In fact, in the recent past there has been a general downward trend in FCNR interest rates.
Calcutta Capt. SURENDRA MANOCHA

NOT TRUE

It is untrue that P.M. Mohapatra, principal secretary to Chief Minister Biju Patnaik, is facing corruption charges in the Konark land deal as stated in your story ("Making Noise", December 31).
Bhubaneshwar Information & P.R. Department

■ *The fact is that the charges against P.M. Mohapatra have been a matter of public debate in the state.*
—Editor

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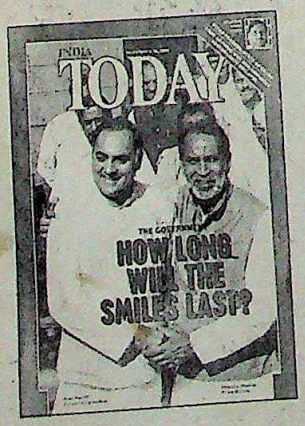

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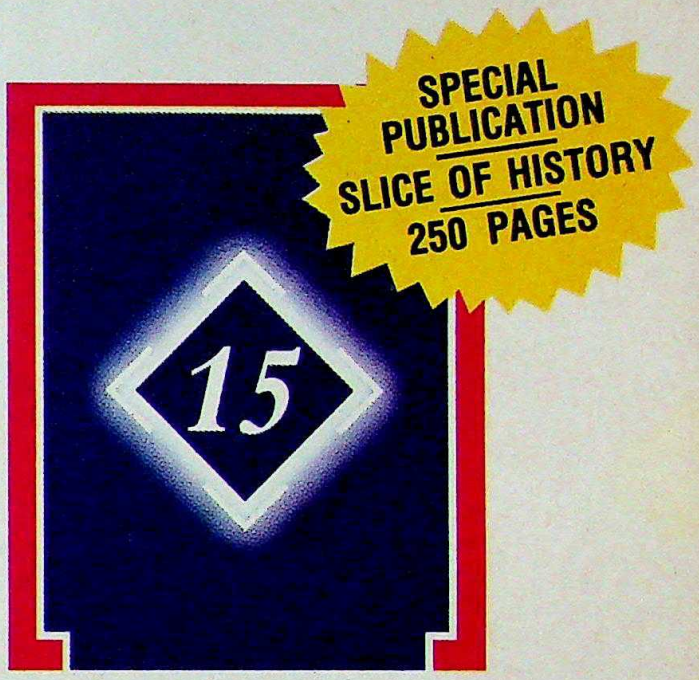
1975-1990



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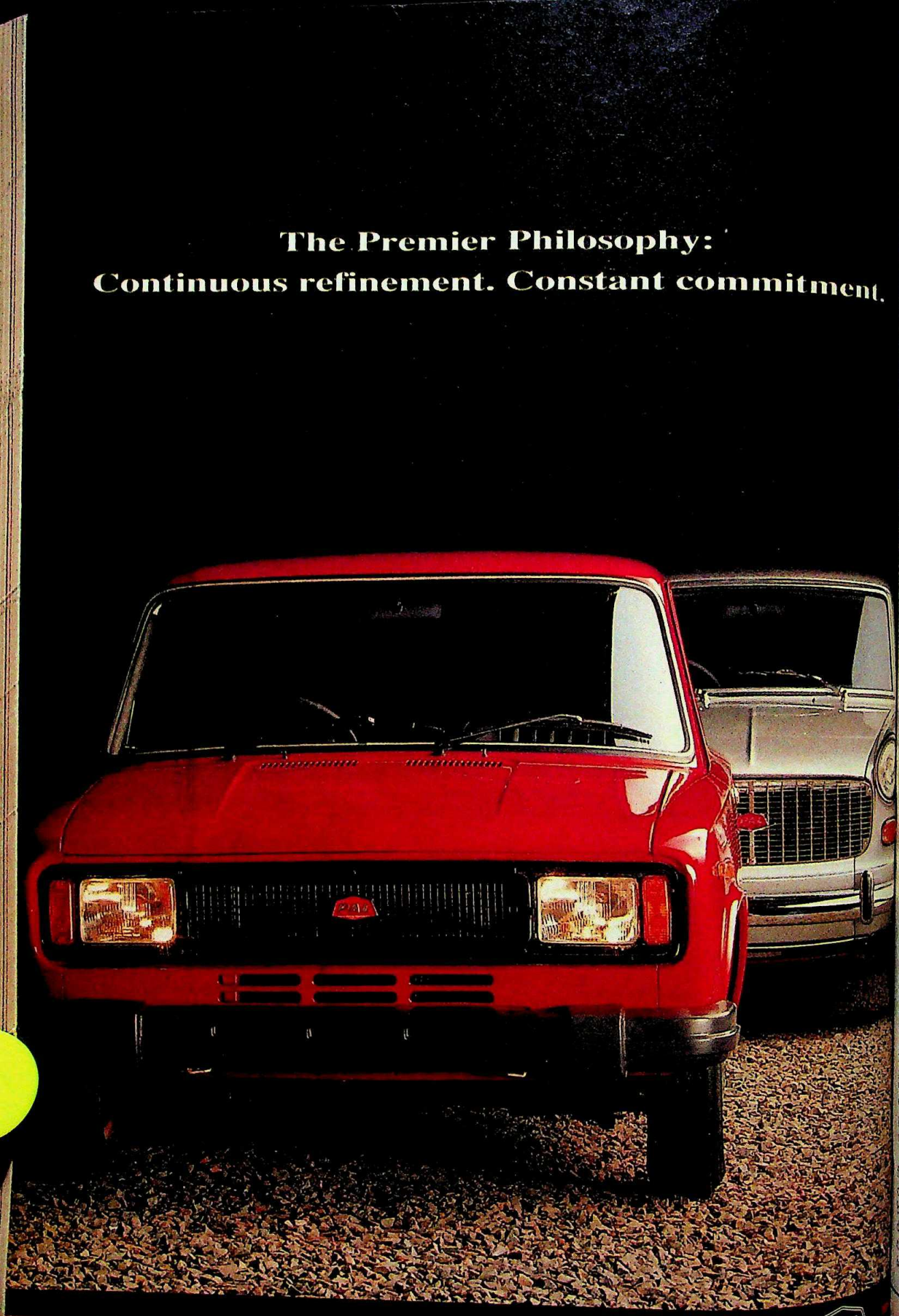

The Premier Automobiles Ltd.

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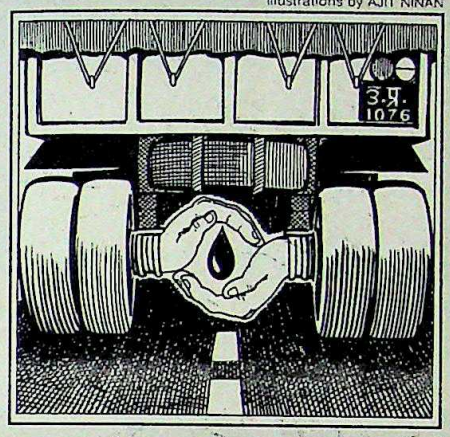
Tackling the Crunch

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN



FINANCE Minister Yashwant Sinha is right in asserting the Gulf crisis should serve to catalyse some bold thinking about radical measures for the economy. This is no time for politically convenient, half-hearted measures and the Government must not balk at taking any stern but necessary steps.

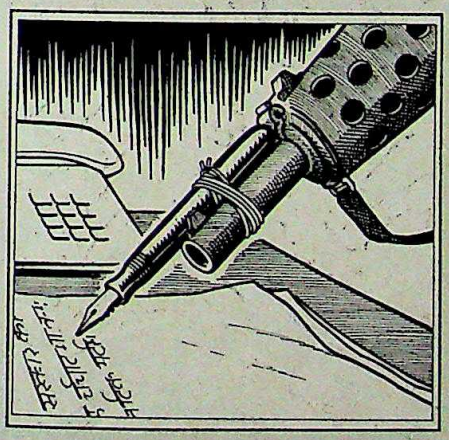
The most immediate concern haunting Indians is the petroleum crunch. The lines of trucks at diesel pumps is a sobering spectacle and, perhaps, a portent of worse to come. The problem needs tackling on a war footing.

While the long-term solution to becoming less dependent on imported fuel lies in revamping the entire oil exploration policy, there should be equal stress on conservation measures to reduce consumption. In this regard, the Government should first re-examine the Motor Vehicles Act implemented last year. While some of its aims—emphasis on road safety, cutting down pollution, roadworthiness of vehicles—are laudable, a key provision, unfortunately, has unnecessarily raised diesel consumption.

The maximum load a truck can now carry has been reduced from 12 tonnes to 9 tonnes. So, where three trucks once hauled 36 tonnes of goods (with an average consumption of 3-4 litres per km) now four trucks are required to do the same job. This entails consumption of 20 per cent more diesel—adding an extra requirement of more than 3 million tonnes to the truck industry's annual consumption of 17 million tonnes. The additional import cost: about Rs 800 crore. As 59 per cent of all goods are now moved by road an increase in diesel consumption is inflationary for the entire economy.

Also, there is a need for the promulgation of a comprehensive long-term surface transportation policy. Its priorities should include providing incentives to the transport industry to switch to more fuel-efficient multi-axle vehicles now in use in most advanced nations. (India is still straddled with two-axle gas guzzlers). Accompanying measures must be aimed at introducing fuel-efficient taxis; ploughing back a large percentage of the revenue generated by road transport into road improvement schemes; and, importantly, exploring cost-effective alternatives—rail and water—to road transport. For inspiration, India can look towards Japan, a totally oil dependent nation, which weathered the oil shocks of the early '70s by achieving a 40 per cent cutback in consumption.

Codes of Conduct



THE latest developments in Punjab should serve as a traumatic reminder to every newspaper and journalist about the fragility of the freedom of the press. It is being choked. The most recent blow is the renewed threat by militants to close down all newspapers if they blank out items favouring their cause.

This latest extremist threat is an example of the doublesqueeze that journalists are suffering. It is in response to a government notification giving the authorities the power to seize publications running "objectionable material". The Government has shown that it means business by confiscating copies of *The Tribune* for carrying news items based on handouts from militant groups. The press is thus, sadly, under pressure from not only the militants but also the state Government.

Clearly, the press has become an easy scapegoat for frustrations on both sides. Militants and government officials, in tandem, as it were, accuse Punjab's press of being partisan. This is because, in the excruciatingly difficult situation of reporting from the violence-torn state, the press, by and large, fell into the unfortunate pitfall of identifying itself either with the "Hindu" cause or that of Sikh fundamentalism.

This made it vulnerable to attacks from all flanks. The case may have been different had it retained its credibility, as witness even Saddam Hussain allowing CNN's Peter Arnett to continue reporting out of Baghdad. But the Punjab press failed to evolve guidelines or ethics to deal with the job of reporting on terrorism. The job of differentiating a "terrorist" from a "militant" was left to correspondents or desk editors. Few papers have staff correspondents shouldering full responsiblity for what they write. They depend on stringers who feed on government largesse or militant favours. For the activities of terrorists the press usually relied on police handouts, and for police excesses on allegations of political parties.

With its credibility compromised, Punjab's press has become handicapped in fighting back the choking pincer of government-militant diktats. But fight back, it must. The first step could well be the adoption by newspapers of a code of ethics and guidelines designed to ensure independent and fair reporting to the extent feasible in Punjab. With this, hand in hand, must go a determination to fight restrictions placed by the extremists and the Government.

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SCHEDULE TO THE PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT

	As at 31st March 1990 Rupees	Rupees	As at 31st March 1989 Rupees	Rupees
iule 9 NT ASSETS				
'est Accrued on Deposits Banks		-		68,269
in-progress - at cost ertified by the dent and General er)		46,91,879		63,52,561
y Debtors (Unsecured) , outstanding for over onths:				
nsidered Good	38,85,093		23,17,364	
nsidered Doubtful	-		40,611	
	38,85,093		23,57,975	
Debts: dered Good	5,14,99,751		4,49,62,656	
des debts due from nies under the same ement: Rs.29,27 ious year Rs.4,500) um amount due during ear - Rs.1,08,4 8				
	5,53,84,844		4,73,20,631	
Provision for ful Debts	-		40,611	
		5,53,84,844		4,72,80,020
and Bank Balances: ash on hand	22,000		20,489	
Scheduled Bank in: urrent Accounts	5,10,556		5,53,773	
eposit Accounts	25,006		2,85,000	
		5,57,562		
		6,06,34,285		5,45,60,114
ule 10 AND ADVANCES ecured, considered good nces recoverable in or in kind or for e to be received				
sit with bank		53,71,010		34,43,099
nce payment of me-tax		2,17,000		2,32,000
		47,38,721		36,15,067
		1,03,26,731		72,90,166

	31st March Rupees
Schedule 11 OTHER INCOME Interest:	
Bank Deposits	30,375
Others	765
Profit on Sale of Fixed Assets (Net)	
Provisions no longer required	
Miscellaneous Income	
Schedule 12 EXPENSES Salaries, Bonus and Allowances - Includes Bonus Rs.9,38,330 (Previous Year Rs.9,04,033)	1,42,22,781
Staff Welfare Expenses	11,37,471
Contribution to Provident Fund	7,79,247
Contribution to Approved Gratuity Fund	1,91,607
Contribution to Approved Superannuation Fund	2,71,442
Contribution to Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme	8,351
Rent	
Rates and Taxes	
Repairs and Maintenance	
Light and Heat	
Travelling Expenses	
Entertaining	
Motor Vehicle Running Expenses	
Lease Charges	
Telephone, Telex and Telegrams	
Printing and Stationery	
Interest and Finance Charges:	
On Term Loan	4,74,302
On Cash Credit	13,18,767
On Others	64,913
Cash Discount	65,690
Insurance	
Legal and Professional Charges	
Auditors' Remuneration:	
For Audit Fees	25,000
For Certification	375
For Other Services	-
Reimbursement of Exp.	1,380
Miscellaneous Expenses	

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31st March 1989	
Rupees	Rupees
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	10,18,536
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11,37,471	
	1,60,32,024
7,79,24[illegible]	
1,91,60[illegible]	
2,71,4[illegible]	
8,35[illegible]	
	11,46,695
	32,70,461
	30,038
	18,20,512
	5,09,344
	32,15,332
	3,94,340
	8,54,872
	11,80,008
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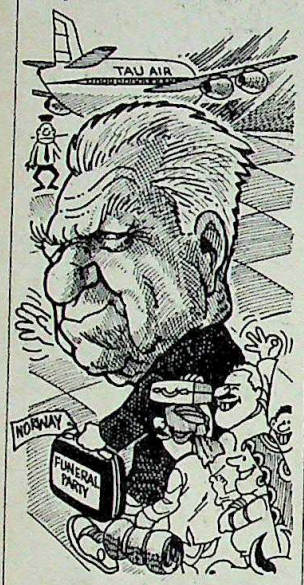
Tau's Tantrums

● The Tau and his gaily-turbaned and attired entourage of family and friends certainly made the headlines with their recent visit to Norway to attend the deceased



king's last rites. But what was lost in the bargain was the real news behind the news which was another surefire indicator of Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal's growing tensions with Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar.

The fact is that Devi Lal almost never went to Norway, coming within an inch of cancelling his tour in a huff just before he was scheduled to depart. This was because the prime minister, for reasons of austerity, told the Tau to take a regular flight.

This came as somewhat of a *deja vu* for the Tau who recalled that a couple of months earlier he had quietly, albeit reluctantly, agreed to cancel a private European junket because of protocol issues raised by the MEA. But this time he rose to his full height in Jatesque defiance. He'd go in a special plane or not at all. Why shouldn't he, his aides confided, if V.C. Shukla could charter a plane to Sri Lanka and China? The Tau finally left in the special plane, accompanied, among others, by a real estate developer and a lobbyist for multinational power companies.

Missing Morarka

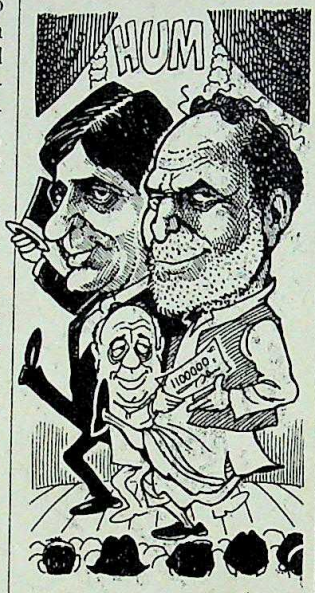
● Ever since Kamal Morarka began functioning as de facto chief of staff to Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, the uninvited high-profile has been following him everywhere. Especially to 12 Teen Murti Lane, his official residence—often to the annoyance of a Maharashtra MP, who happens to live at 12 Teen Murti Marg. Every day the MP's home is invaded by hordes of favour-seekers wanting an audience with Morarka. The MP has made it clear that Morarka lives down the lane, not up his marg, but to no avail. The Maharashtrian-who-would-not-be-Morarka has now asked Morarka for a favour. The PMO should post a guard at his house to ex-

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

plain to wayward visitors how "off the marg" they are.

Prime Showman

● Style certainly maketh this prime minister. This time it's V.P. Singh's *bete noire*—megastar Amitabh Bachchan—who's been given a clean chit. And what

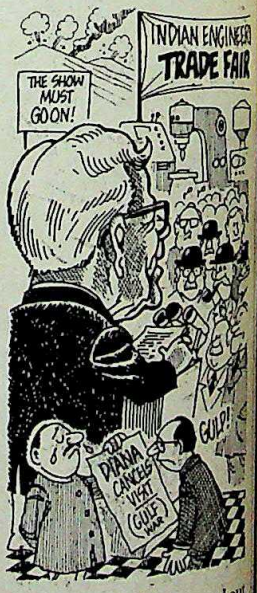


a chit. Not only did the prime minister inaugurate the premiere of the film *Hum* which had the audience *humming* along, but he also said he couldn't afford to refuse this request as people would interpret his absence as a snub while the truth was otherwise. Nor was the prime minister a stickler for convention. He waited backstage while the other guests came on stage and then walked on—escorted by Bachchan—right on cue. The prime minister's candour also knows few bounds. On stage was R.P. Goenka who gave a cheque for Rs 11 lakh for a hospital in Ibrahimpatti. Tucking away the cheque he said that Goenka and his money were not soon parted but he knew how to get money out of him. V.P. Singh wouldn't be amused.

Going Strong

● The motto of this government seems to be that the show must go on. No matter how minuscule its presence in Parliament, no matter how virulently its allies attack its policies, no matter how socialist the predilections of its prime minister, the Government just chugs on business as usual. Gulf war or no Gulf war. Industrialists and foreign investors, once considered anathema to the Chandra Shekhar way of life, have gained a new respectability with the Government pushing for the success of the Indian Engineering Trade Fair.

The fair looked like it might be cancelled after Prince Charles and Lady Di, who were coming specially



to inaugurate it, dropped out citing the uncertainties of the Gulf war. The Royal Marine Band that was to inaugurate the bash also bowed out. But the Indian Government wasn't deterred. It went ahead with preparations for the participation of a total of 500 foreign companies, even roping in President R. Venkataraman for the opening.

TAIL PIECE

The Gulf war has not only spawned a whole genre of Saddam Hussain jokes but also all manner of puns and wordplay. The latest one doing the rounds:

It's dam(n) sad that Saddam and mad Sam have fought.

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knew how to
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be amused.

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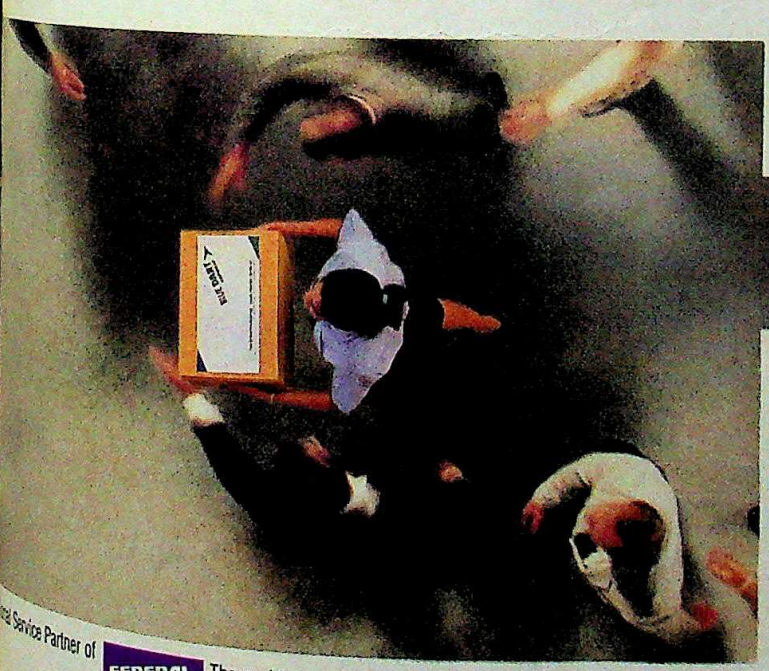

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M. K. Shah
Managing Director

November 25, 1990

To,
Mr. A.D. Gupta
President,
Forward Investments Pvt. Ltd.,
World Trade Centre,
Cuffe Parade,
Bombay-400 005

Dear ADG,

I've gone through your report on company x. I think your assessment is correct. It does fit rather nicely into our plans.

As far as buying them out is concerned, I prefer plan A.

It's the cleanest!

Regards

M. K. SHAH

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Executive Bond

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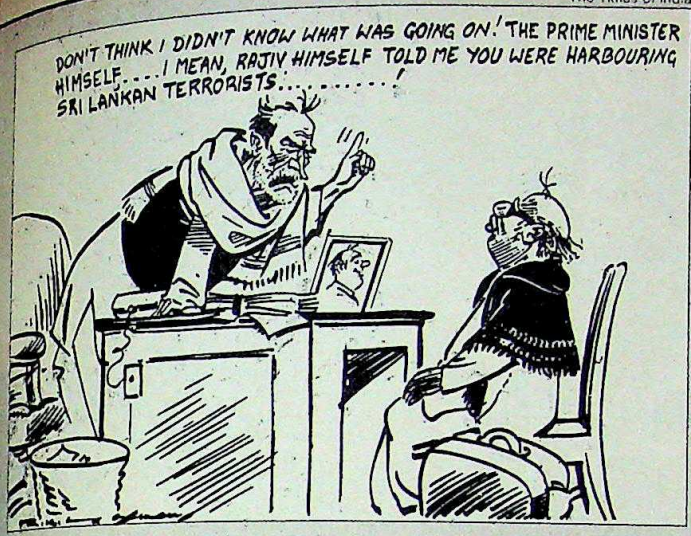
The Times of India



• *It is an unmitigated crime against the country and the people of India and this Government must go lock, stock and barrel.*

■ K.K. TEWARY on the refuelling of US planes in India

• *I came to India because I was missing my Swamy.*

■ ADNAN KHASHOGGI, referring to Chandra Swami, in *The Hindustan Times*

• *The very fact that a group of 36 MPs is managing the affairs of a country of India's size and that too in a critical situation is a matter of grave concern.*

■ S.R. BOMMAI, Janata Dal president, in *Patriot*

• *The people have this phobia. I am not suffering from any such phobia.*

■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR, on the Congress(I) withdrawing support, in *The Week*

• *Chandra Shekhar saved himself by sacking me.*

■ M. KARUNANIDHI in *Deccan Herald*

• *In fact the* LTTE *was the foster child of* AIADMK.

■ DINESH GOSWAMI, AGP leader and former Union minister in *The Hindustan Times*

• *The previous government was a minority government but nobody could call it a rump government.*

■ L.K. ADVANI in *Patriot*

• *Subramanian Swamy should be taught a lesson.*

■ DEVI LAL referring to Swamy's threat to the Speaker in *The Telegraph*

• *This would spell the collapse of the Centre too.* ■ N.D. TIWARI, on withdrawing support to Mulayam Singh Yadav, in *The Independent*

• *I had a brilliant mother. Today men have outnumbered women but made a mess of the current situation.*

■ J.R.D. TATA in *The Telegraph*

• *The hormonal interplay in my body is not at its acme, so I can only talk of what stimulates me mentally.*

■ MAHESH BHATT, on the female star who excites him most, in *Cine Blitz*

• *I can say a lot more dialogues than only 'Aah! Bachao meri izzat!'*

■ SHILPA SHIRODKAR in *Stardust*

• *Anil Ambani, one man I never admired. Now, one man I'll admire forever.*

■ RAJESH KHANNA in *Stardust*

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Against your gift order, we will send the cassettes in special presentation boxes (for gift orders of 4 cassettes or multiples of 4) together with a card carrying your compliments, by mail or courier.

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Morning Ragas Code	No. of Cassettes	**Evening Ragas** Code	No. of Cassettes
A 90001	_____	A 90009	_____
A 90002	_____	A 90010	_____
A 90003	_____	A 90011	_____
A 90004	_____	A 90012	_____
Afternoon Ragas Code	No. of Cassettes	**Night Ragas** Code	No. of Cassettes
A 90005	_____	A 90013	_____
A 90006	_____	A 90014	_____
A 90007	_____	A 90015	_____
A 90008	_____	A 90016	_____

Total No. of Cassettes _____

MY NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

_____ PIN _____

I enclose my crossed cheque*/Demand Draft for Rs. _____ (add Rs. 10 for outstation cheques i.e., outside Delhi) payable to **Music Today.**

* Cheques/DD payable in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras must be MICR only.
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MUSIC TODAY

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Cartoons by ANIL SHARMA

FRUITLESS FLIGHT

■ Passengers flying by Indian Airlines always say a little prayer before they get on board. And last fortnight their fears seemed to be confirmed as the Calcutta-Agartala flight ran into heavy weather almost as soon as it took off.

Just as the passengers were unfastening their seat belts, a young man stormed into the cockpit. He threatened the pilot with two round objects—which he claimed were deadly grenades—wrapped in handkerchieves. And demanded that the flight return to Calcutta. However, the hijacker's hopes crash-landed as the pilot foiled his plans. Realising that the kerchieves concealed nothing more lethal than a pomegranate and an orange, the pilot was unfazed.

The cool-headed pilot then alerted the rest of the crew who nabbed the phoney and handed him to the authorities at Agartala. Quite fruitless the flight proved for the hijacker.

TIED UP IN KNOTS

■ Marriages may be made in heaven but this Bhubaneswar bridegroom decided that heaven could wait. Days before he was meant to tie the knot, he went on a fast unto death. The reason: no, he was not suffering from a classic case of pre-nupital jitters, but was asking for a probe into the corruption charges against Paradip Phosphates Ltd (PPL) officials.

Apparently, the gentleman in question, who was the general secretary of the PPL union, chose to resort to this form of protest unmindful of the fact that the invitation cards for his marriage had been printed. And he

continued to sit on an indefinite fast outside the chief minister's house.

However, his efforts were in vain. Not only did the chief minister turn a deaf ear to him, even the company management was not rattled. And the groom remains adamant in his refusal even as the pandal fires turn to ashes.

INTENSIVE CARE

■ Visitors to Chandigarh's Chhat Bir zoo last fortnight were flummoxed. The cages were filled with more than lions and monkeys. Syringes, capsules and hot water bottles were strewn around. Had they meandered into a hospital by mistake?

Apparently, the chimpanzee enclosure had been transformed into an intensive care unit because its inmate, a huge ape, Goga, was seriously ill. And the authorities were leaving no stone unturned in their effort to treat the infirm ape. To begin with, two heaters were installed to stave off the winter air. And, experts were brought in from the Ludhiana medical college.

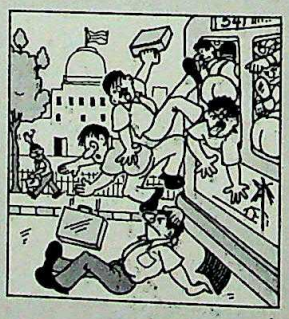
While Goga battled for life, his mate Rita pined for him. She was so upset that she even refused to eat until her heart-throb recovered.

Seems like her monkey prayers have been answered. Goga is back to normal and is basking in the sun with his mate.

PANELESS SOLUTION

■ If the anti-Mandal agitators destroyed the window panes of all the Delhi's buses, there are some advantages to it. At least that's what some of the capital's commuters discovered recently—quite coincidentally though.

As the traffic moved at snail's pace due to the diversions for the Republic Day parade, the exasperation of people in buses grew. At this point one enterprising man decided to make use of the gaping holes in the bus where the window panes had once been. Since the bus was chock-a-block with

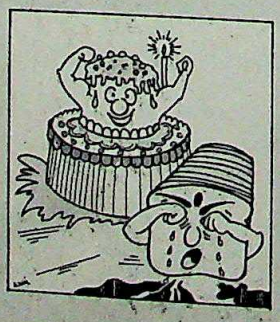


people, he wriggled out of the window, feet first.

From there he walked to his office, only to reach it well before the bus could. Before he knew all the bus passengers were sliding out of the windows and hotfooting to their destinations—disproving the adage 'no pane, no gain'.

EATING CAKE

■ Marie Antoinette would have given her royal approval. With the shortage of food items accompanied by rising prices, recently there was a let-them-eat-cake situation in Bombay's Victoria Terminus, which was reminiscent of France



before the revolution.

It all began at a popular fast food counter at the crowded train station which generally sold sandwiches to hordes of hungry commuters every day. However, last fortnight the ever-familiar sandwiches neatly wrapped in polythene were missing. In their place was a row of cake slices instead. The beaming salesman had a logical explanation for the sudden switch: the recent hike in bread prices.

However, what the innovative salesman seemed to have forgotten was you can't have your cake and eat it too!

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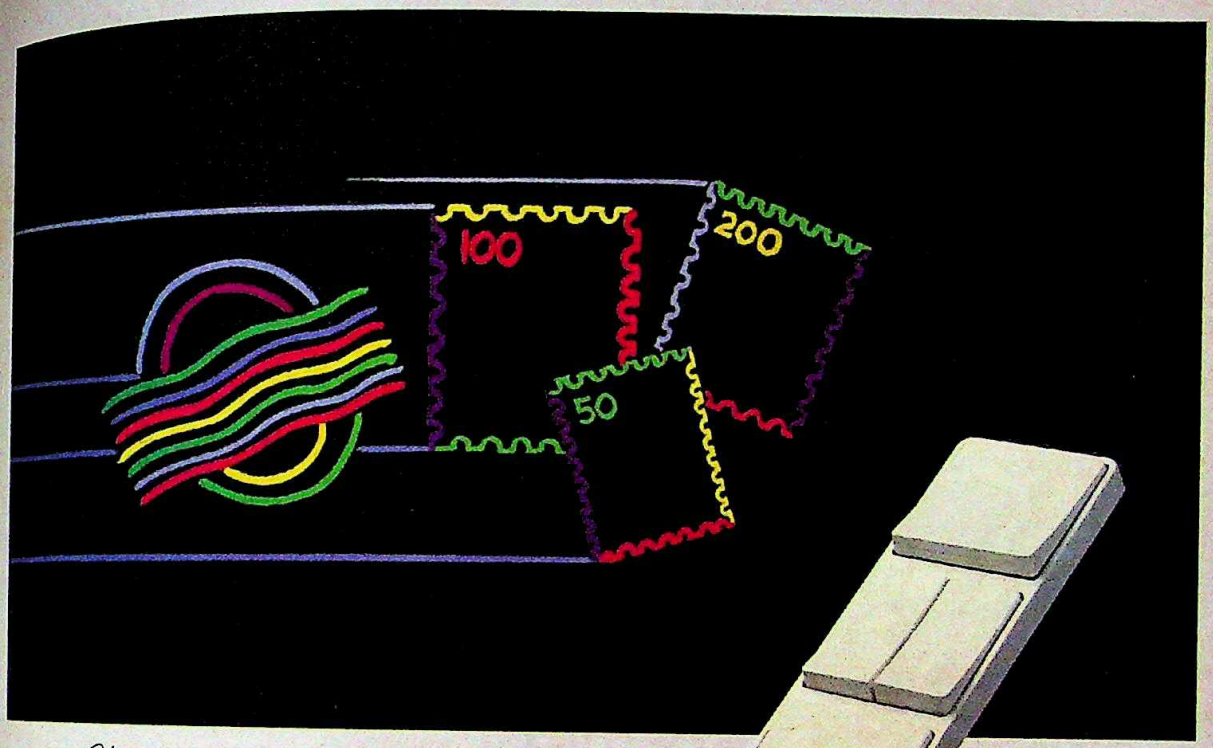

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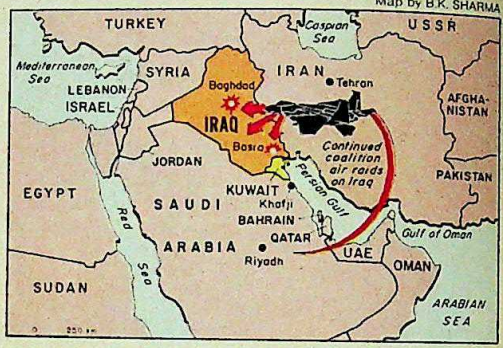
THE GULF

POST-WAR SCENARIO

GEORGES NERILLON/GAMMA

Map by B.K. SHARMA



By SHEKHAR GUPTA in the Middle East

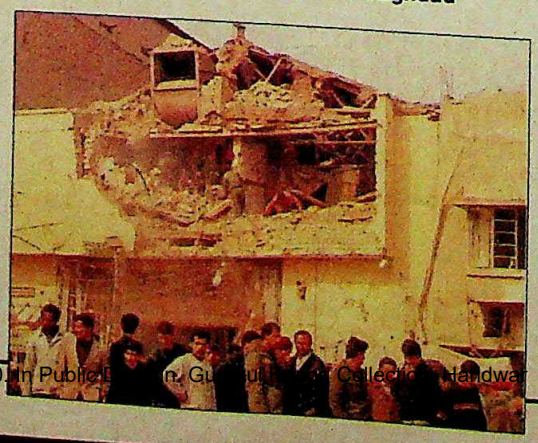
AS generals move divisions and brigades, tanks and commandos, desert rats and marines, new, long-term political moves are being contemplated on the vast middle-eastern chessboard to shape the turbulent region's post-war future. For the West, victory in war will be self-defeating if it does not make way for a stabler Middle East. For the Arab nations aligned with them, it will be catastrophic. Within an utterly fragmented post-war Islamic world there could be a new tussle for leadership. For Israel, the pivot around which middle-eastern politics often spins, the war could bring long-term changes which could either give the Jewish state a respectable middle-eastern identity or send it on an isolationist path. Presuming an ultimate allied victory several question-marks hang on the future of the world's most volatile region.

POST-WAR IRAQ: BATTERED OR MORE BELLIGERENT

The shape, character and role of post-war Iraq—with or without Saddam—will be crucial for the region's future. But will it contribute to stability?

WHAT role Iraq plays in the future of the region will depend on the kind of defeat it is handed out in the current war. An utterly humiliated Iraq, its infrastructure bombed into rubble and population driven to starvation and misery, will be the last thing the alliance would need. But that is precisely what they have set out to do. The western calculation is that a battered Iraq will also provide opportunities for reconstruction and a political foothold. The western best-case scenario is an Iraq chastened by war, desperately needing aid and willing to sign on the dotted line for a return to a prosperous future without the Ba'athist militarism much in the fashion of post-World War II Germany. But this is the Middle East, not Europe, and such projections may not work here. Also, with or without Saddam, Iraq, as the cradle of the Arab civilisation, will always remain central to pan-Arabism.

■ Salvage operation in bomb-hit Baghdad



Hitler was hated throughout Europe. Saddam is now admired *(see box)* if not exactly loved in a region straddling two continents. If he survives the war, Iraq will become more isolationist, perhaps more militarist, perhaps a long-term political island like Cuba. As a senior western diplomat says: "The worst-case scenario is that Saddam is driven out of Kuwait after a tough fight, emerges a hero in defeat and rebuilds his military." The expulsion from Kuwait would

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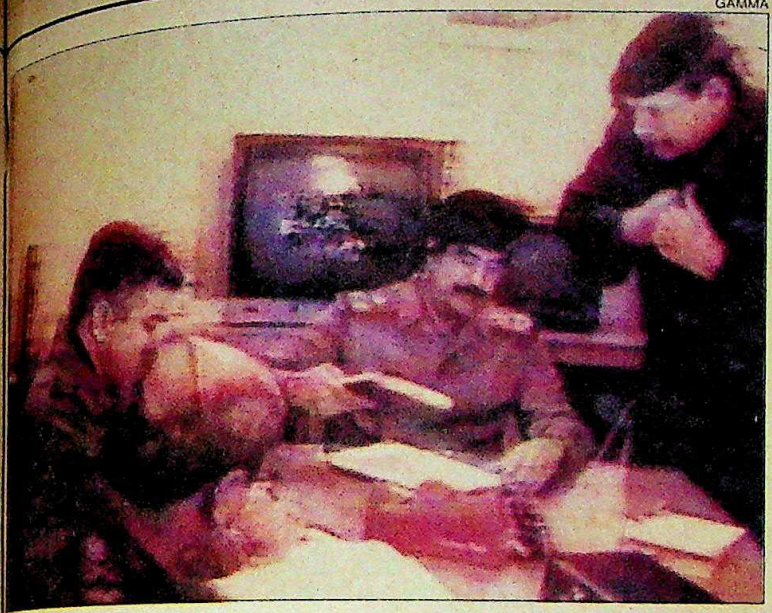
GAMMA



President Saddam Hussain surrounded by his staff: unchallenged power

result in the lifting of the UN sanctions. He only has to pump out oil in large volumes and western firms will make a beeline for Baghdad to rebuild his nation and military. Such an Iraq would not only make the West's military victory pyrrhic but also, in the long run, threaten to devour all their interests in the region. "Whether you like it or not, Iraq will emerge a stronger threat to the West after this war," says Deputy Prime Minister Sa'adoun Hammadi, echoing Baghdad's official line.

It is no surprise then that the allies have been so keen to delay the land assault on Kuwait. While minimising casualties is one purpose, the other is to give themselves the time to so disembowel Iraq economically that it ceases to be a threat. A desperate, pauperised population is also more likely to seek a change in dispensation.

Even if that happens the future scenario cannot be so simplistic. The West faces three possibilities:

■ Saddam is removed from the scene but there is no successor. Saddam has no challenger in the country, or even in exile. There is no Ayatollah Khomeini holed up in Paris, no Yeltsin. There is no Iraqi with a second voice. No monarch in exile, no Vaclav Havel, no Walesa. There isn't even an Ion Iliescu, a relatively moderate, lesser evil within his own party. Saddam's removal could create a dangerous power vacuum. It is ridiculous to expect the other Arab states, which still have medieval dispensations, to inspire a change in Iraq. And it will be suicidal for the Americans to do so.

■ All said and done Iraq and the Ba'athists represent the only foothold of modernism in a largely obscurantist, fundamentalist Islamic world. The West will suffer a major political defeat if the Ba'athists are so totally destroyed that they are replaced by fundamentalists even if they happen to be stooges of the Saudis.

■ Once the western forces withdraw, Iraq will be up for grabs with all its three neighbours—Syria, Turkey and Iran—eyeing its territory. So whatever the regime, for middle-eastern security after the war, it will have to take Iraq in its sweep.

SECURITY OF THE OIL-RICH SMALL ARAB STATES

They will be willing to pay, but after the war will the world be able to defend their large territories and small populations for ever?

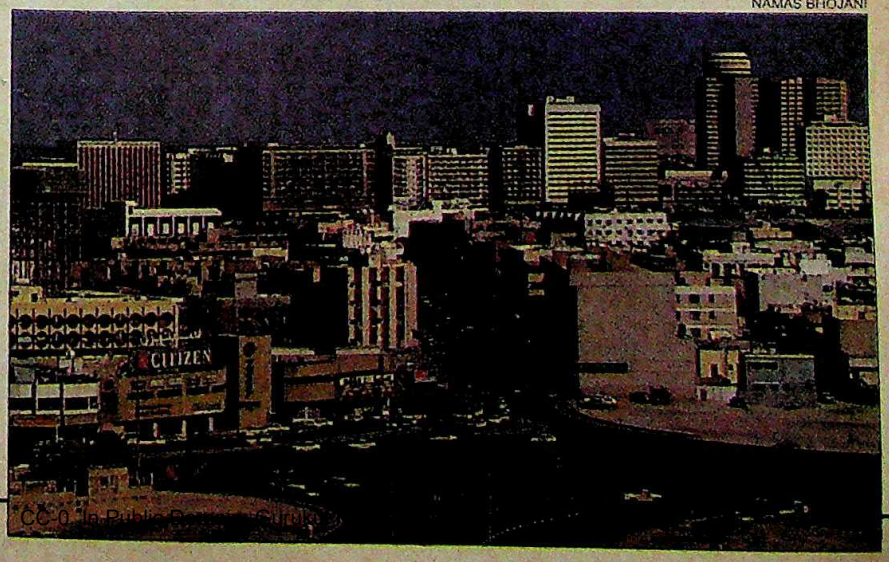
THE oil-rich Arab states present a remarkable recipe for insecurity: lots of riches, lots of land, but too few people and little foresight on security. If the Americans hadn't moved in so quickly Saddam could have cut through Saudi Arabia or Bahrain and then on to Dubai and the rich United Arab Emirates as well. In the past small armies have come up in the Gulf armed with billions of dollars worth of western hardware. But how good mere weaponry can be against a large, determined army was demonstrated by Kuwait which did not hold for even six hours. The Gulf states will have to choose one of three options:

■ Pay cash for long-term western protection. It will be disastrous public relations for the western allies but they could keep a deterrent presence somewhere close in the region. Or at least resort to massive forward dumping of equipment which a rapid deployment force could quickly employ in a defensive role. In a region where xenophobia often means distrust of the West this will be politically imprudent.

■ Hire armies for their defence. In the past Pakistan has contributed sizeable muscle for Saudi security, though at a price. With an oversized army and a

■ An aerial view of oil-rich Dubai: no foresight on security

NAMAS BHOJANI



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blundering economy. Egypt is making the same offer now. Bangladesh is already raising a sixth army division with an eye on the Gulf export markets. The rich Gulf states can take sizeable armies on hire from Islamic countries but mercenaries cannot offer long-term security.

■ The best solution is one advocated by Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan. The leaders of the Middle East, including Israel, should create a new security regime accompanied by across-the-board disarmament. In the past years the region has accounted for nearly half of the world's arms purchases without taking a fraction off its insecurities. To succeed such a plan would have to involve Israel.

A NEW ISRAEL TEMPERED BY SOMEONE ELSE'S WAR

Iraq's impending defeat is indirectly Israel's victory, but will it leave Tel Aviv more realistic or arrogant in its approach towards Palestinians?

AMID clamour for retaliation and celebrations over Saddam's impending defeat, an Israel reaping substantial benefits out of a war within the Arab world is also realising that the post-war world will bring new pressures for change. Even the right-wing Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Benjamin Netanyahu, admitted as much, saying that "Saddam's defeat will create opportunities for a dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians".

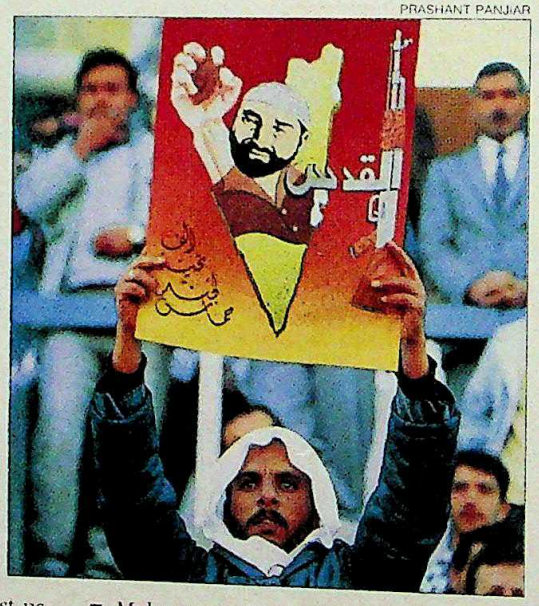
In return for its restraint on the Scud attacks, Israel has been demanding western acceptance of its position of making no concessions to the Palestinians. But the Americans have made it clear that once the sand settles in the theatre of war, a solution will have to be found. There can be no long-term security in the region, and for Israel, unless the Palestinian problem is solved—which even many rightwingers agree. Says Abie Nathan, Bombay-born Jewish peacenik who has been imprisoned for his sympathies with the Palestinians: "This war provides a historic opportunity. The Arabs have no grudge against us except Palestine."

For the record Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has rejected the idea of joining a middle-eastern peace conference. But post-war realities will leave Israel with the following options:

■ Take an even more militaristic, right-wing path and give nothing to the Palestinians except limited autonomy. The long-term consequence of which will be international isolation.

■ Palestinian protestors in Amman: old wounds

PRASHANT PANJIAR



■ Make some concessions to the Palestinians and, as several American leaders have been suggesting, let the West look after its security, perhaps by joining NATO. The Israelis are too proud and distrusting of the West to accept that.

■ Make peace with the Palestinians and Arab neighbours and mesh with the middle-eastern region.

■ The last option is the favourite of the Israeli liberals. Former prime minister and Labour Party leader Shimon Peres articulates it clearly: "Israel has to negotiate with the Palestinians and the Arabs. It cannot afford to maintain this military superiority. It will bleed us." Peres and other liberals suggest Israel should take the lead to create a middle-eastern common market and provide the skills and technologies the Arabs lack. "Security will come not by relying on modern military technology but on old political wisdom. Israel simply cannot afford to be a small island of prosperity in a sea of poverty," he told INDIA TODAY.

For the record the conservatives will oppose such pacifism. But, barring the extreme right-wing fringe, most have been shaken up by the current war. If the West had not moved in in 1990, Israel would have had to fight Iraq in 1992, if not earlier. Even in its own destruction, Iraq has jolted Israel's confidence in its military superiority over the Arabs. Security will come from coexistence which, in turn, means peace with the Palestinians.

FUTURE OF NON-OIL, VULNERABLE ARAB STATES

They have to make a choice between domination by the West or the oil states, but which of the two devils will they ultimately plump for?

ONE raw nerve Saddam has touched so effectively is the poor, non-oil Arab's contempt for his oil-rich Arab cousin. It is partly a travesty of geography and demography and partly a perfidy of realpolitik that while the majority of the Arab population and the poorer states—Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan—have borne the brunt of the Arab world's blood feud with Israel, the richer, less populous states have only benefited from it. "We fought three wars against Israel and pauperised ourselves. But the oil states only raised prices, made money and provided lip service to our cause," says Sadi Sonbol, editor-in-chief of Egypt's official daily *Al Akhbar*. The feeling exists in all the non-oil countries including Yemen and Sudan. In countries like Jordan, it has already blown up into massive resentment.

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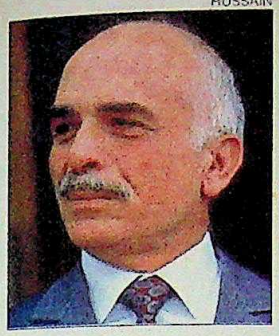
ALAIN BUU/GAMMA

HUSSAIN



D. MOHAN/P.B

■ (From left to right) Hosni Mobarak, King Hussain and Assad

As the power players redraw the region's political map, the following options are being debated:

■ An equitable distribution or sharing of oil wealth. States like Saudi Arabia may be more willing to share some of their reserves with their neighbours in the post-war phase than before.

■ Formation of a middle-eastern common market to pool in the poorer countries' manpower and the rich ones, cash. The problem will be the ideological differences between the poor, but politically more pragmatic, and the rich, but religious orthodox, states.

■ Encouragement of an arrangement under which the sizeable armies of the poorer states provide protection to the rich neighbours. However there is too much distrust between the neighbours and many regimes are threatened by coups. Also, this will go against the plans for at least a limited disarmament in the region.

In fact, the West's major worry is the survival of the regimes in these countries. Egypt's Hosni Mobarak is already facing a fundamentalist backlash. Jordan's King Hussain has recoiled to a pro-Iraq posture but his majority Palestinians still do not trust him and may rise in revolt if he makes peace with Israel. In Morocco, the pro-West Shah Hassan has sent a contingent to fight alongside the allies. But his sister and daughter are openly collecting funds for the Iraqis underlining a dilemma that will confront the western victors soon.

IRAN, THE EMERGING FACTOR IN GULF STABILITY

The powerful Shi'ite nation is aiming for the leadership of the Islamic world, but how will it manage to muster the requisite credibility?

THE descriptions vary with the predilections of the parties involved: joker in the pack, peacemaker, kingmaker, fishing in troubled waters. But the Iranian diplomatic dash over the past fortnight has left analysts both in the Middle East and the West confounded. But now the Iranian gameplan is emerging:

■ Play the role of a mature peacemaker and make a bid for the leadership of the Islamic world.

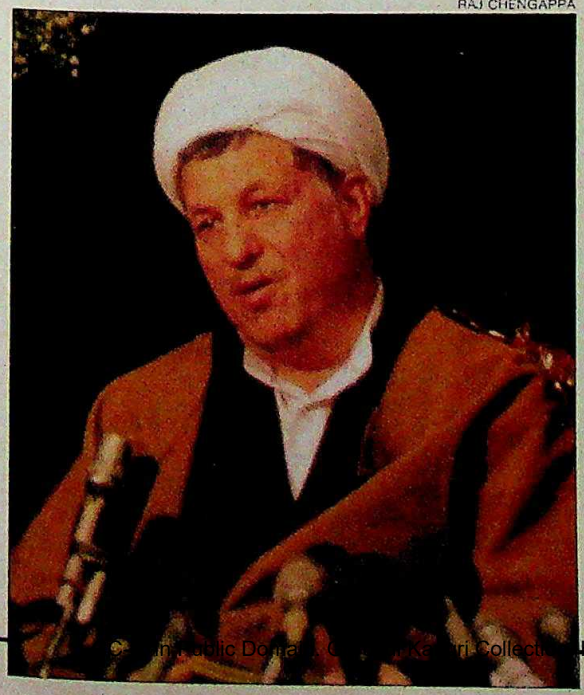
■ Force the West to take the lead in breaking the hiatus in ties with Teheran. Iran needs the West for industrialisation.

■ Make a grab for the spoils in a post-war Middle East. Some will come from Iraq where a post-Saddam regime could be more Shi'ite-oriented. Given the 55-per cent Shia population in the country so far ruled by the Ba'athist Sunnis. Some will come by slashing the Saudi sway over the shrines and eroding the Saudi royal family's credibility as the guardians of Islam.

The Iranian gameplan is logical. When Iraqi Vice-President Tariq Ibrahim visited Iran just before the January 15 deadline, they went along with Iraqi requests for some support and sanctuary for aircraft. But soon after the war began Teheran responded with a shrewd two-axis approach. It condemned the West, and offered to broker a cease-fire. The Iran-Iraq war had ended with Khomeini accepting "Islamic Brother" Saddam Hussain's call for cease-fire. This time, Iran argued, why doesn't Saddam accept Khamenei's appeal? The appeal would be made while representatives of several key Islamic nations, including Pakistan, are present in Baghdad and if the West does not respond to an Iraqi cease-fire the Islamic nations will hold a summit and perhaps form a joint anti-western front. The fine print reads: under Iran's leadership, an anti-West Islamic world and its leadership is what Khomeini's revolution had set out to achieve. So far Iran has played its cards so well that even Bush is appreciative. But there are stumbling-blocks. Despite Moscow's association with Iranian moves, it would not like Iran to emerge as a leader of the Islamic world with a fall-out in some Soviet Islamic republics which have ethnic and tribal affinities with Iran. There is also Baghdad's own distrust of Teheran. It is a paradox that while courting Iran, Iraq would be more wary of Shi'ite ideological putsch than allied armour. But such paradoxes abound in the middle-eastern chessboard.

■ President Rafsanjani: two-pronged approach

RAJ CHENGAPPA



Thus while it may be easy to talk in terms of a new international order after the war, redrawing the political equations and boundaries will be a lot more complicated than conducting the war. The war may remove Saddam but he is only a symptom of the violent instability characterising the region. And unless that is tackled first, there will be no preventing the recurrence of even more dangerous storms in the oil-rich, blood-soaked desert.

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INDO-US RELATIONS

A Positive Phase

Now with the devaluation of Pakistan's strategic significance, the US is actively wooing India

THE shrill all-party condemnation of Chandra Shekhar's decision to permit US Air Force planes to refuel at Indian airports makes it clear that India can retain only a minimal defence cooperation with the US whose relationship with India has been developing for over a decade. Whatever shape the post-Gulf war scenario may take, the national consensus now and in the future is to keep the Indian Ocean a zone of peace, free of superpower interference.

Nonetheless, regardless of what happens in the Gulf, the present contours of Indo-US relations will remain, with some movement at the margins. One of the most important reasons is that Pakistan has ceased to be a US proxy in the region. The huge groundswell of public sympathy for Iraqi President Saddam Hussain and the strong support he found in Pakistani Army chief General Aslam Beg makes it clear that Pakistan does not share US fears of militant Islamic fundamentalism. It is now quite clear that the sharp pro-Pakistan tilt in US policy has already begun to correct itself.

Today, the US is at pains to emphasise that the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the end of the Cold War has devalued Pakistan's strategic significance. This has already resulted in a US aid cut of some $300 million for 1990-91, expressions of unease at Pakistan's rapidly developing nuclear programme and the US's refusal to sell sophisticated F-16 aircraft and AWACS to its former "strategic ally".

So at present the US is wooing India with the following promises:

■ Quiet acquiescence in Indian ambitions of being the regional supercop. Notably, American support for greater Indian involvement in the region that began with its direct involvement in the internal conflicts of Sri Lanka and went on to helping the Maldives Government to survive a coup.

■ A future role in policing the sea lanes from the Gulf to the Straits of Malacca along with a US-led international force, a proposal in which senior Indian naval brass have quietly expressed interest.

■ This, it is hinted, could lead to US assistance in building India's Blue Ocean navy. In fact, the current American complaint is that India does not have a cohesive strategic doctrine for building its navy with the result that areas of cooperation remain undefined. Elsewhere, there are promises of quick sales of defence technology. But this means escalated defence spending, a further depletion of resources and a parallel replenishment of political and individual coffers a la Bofors.

■ The US promises to continue acting as honest broker between Pakistan and India. US Embassy officials recall the role of Robert Gates, deputy national security advisor in the White House, in defusing tensions between India and Pakistan last May when border tensions rose dramatically.

So far, the US had assured Pakistan that in the event of an Indian attack, it would support Pakistan politically and with supplies. Even if the aggressor proved hard to pinpoint, the US had promised neutrality, tilted towards Pakistan. Today such a tilt will not appear and if Indo-US ties improve, the tilt could be towards India.

■ Helping Indian requests for loan sanctions from multilateral agencies at a time when India needs cash to tide over its $6 billion trade deficit.

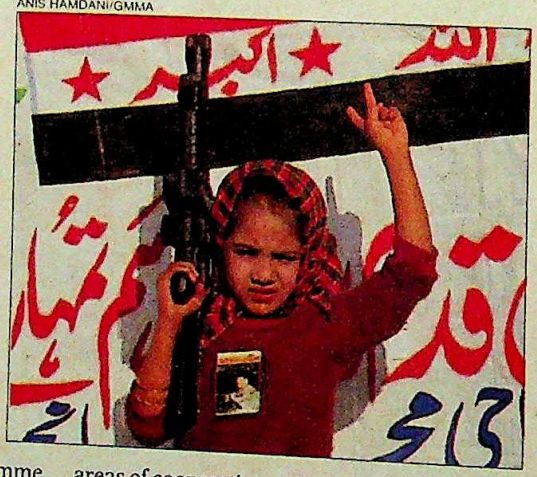
But many of these US assurances come at a point when it fears a consolidation of Islamic forces in the region and when Pakistan cannot be depended on to combat Islamic fundamentalism.

The US may quietly acquiesce in the Indian ambition of being the regional supercop

NAMAS BHOJ

■ **American planes refuelling in Bombay (above); and a pro-Saddam Pakistani child**

ANIS HAMDANI/GMMA



But what if a post-war scenario sees a victorious US determined to continue as the regional policeman? It will provoke even stronger rhetorical condemnation from India and may even momentarily stall further development of Indo-US relations. But for the reasons mentioned above the relationship will survive, at a muted level.

If, on the other hand, the US withdraws its presence from the region and encourages local security arrangements between the Islamic countries in the Gulf, India will not object. Minimal defence cooperation with the US will continue. There will also be greater economic and scientific cooperation. What the US will certainly not resume is the sale of sophisticated defence systems to Pakistan or any country in the region after their "misuse" by Saddam.

Finally, it is possible that after suffering heavy losses, the US might simply back out altogether from the region. Minimal defence cooperation and greater economic cooperation will continue even during such a phase of benign neglect.

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR

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INDIANS IN THE GULF

Caught in the Crossfire

While many fleeing Indians faced travails, a few thousand are still stranded in Iraq and Kuwait

TWO days before American planes started bombarding Iraq, a group of Indians working on a sewage project near the port town of Basra decided that they must do something to protect themselves in case war broke out. The decision came not a day too soon. Using earthmoving vehicles and cranes, trenches were dug where giant concrete pipes were laid and then covered by a metre of sand. No sooner had these makeshift shelters been completed than the skies above started blazing. For over 400 Indian workers who had been engaged by Jaiprakash Associates to work on the drainage scheme, these pipes served as home for nearly two days and nights as bombs rained.

Their ordeal only came to an end when they travelled by a bus convoy to Rutbah on Iraq's border with Jordan. Ten days and three refugee camps later, two chartered Soviet aircraft brought the workers back to Bombay. "I must confess I felt a strange kind of sadness leaving Iraq—the desert had become our home away from home for many months," recalls O.P. Mehta, chief executive in charge of the project.

Mehta and his group were the lucky ones. They at least had their own transport unlike the Indian nurses who found that their exit visas had expired before they could obtain hard currency to pay for being moved out of Baghdad to the Jordan border. Among the other unlucky ones were 80 workers engaged in three hotels managed by the Oberoi group in Iraq.

Since November, the Indian Ambassador to Iraq K.N. Bakshi had been asking companies operating in that country to either terminate or suspend their contracts with Iraqi agencies. Only then could they apply for exit visas. Thus, by the end of November, Jaiprakash Associates had halved their total staff strength in Iraq from 2,400 to 1,200 and ensured that all women and children had returned to India.

But the Oberoi management dillydallied despite the fact that the group and M.S. Oberoi's grandson Ajai Kapur were stranded in Iraq with his wife. It seems that the group's lawyers advised the management that any suspension of its contracts may be tantamount to their cancellation. Despite frantic calls to New Delhi, the staff were in a quandary because they were unable to leave their jobs or even apply for exit visas.

On January 13, 40-odd employees of the Oberoi's Baghdad Babylon Hotel left for another Oberoi group managed hotel—the Nineveh—in Mosul, a hill resort some 160 km from the Turkish border. Here they teamed up with another 40 workers in the Nineveh and the entire group remained holed up in the hotel's basement bomb shelter for more than three weeks: deprived of electricity and surviving on frugal rations. A messenger then managed to reach Baghdad and conveyed a message to Delhi through the only means of communication left, the Indian Embassy's wireless set.

These travails are just the beginning of the problems Indian companies operating in Iraq are going to face. Recovering equipment and dues may pose even bigger headaches. The 20-odd Indian construction companies who have been involved in projects in Iraq are currently owed nearly $1 billion (Rs 1,800 crore). Half of this amount is the value of equipment and stores lying in that country.

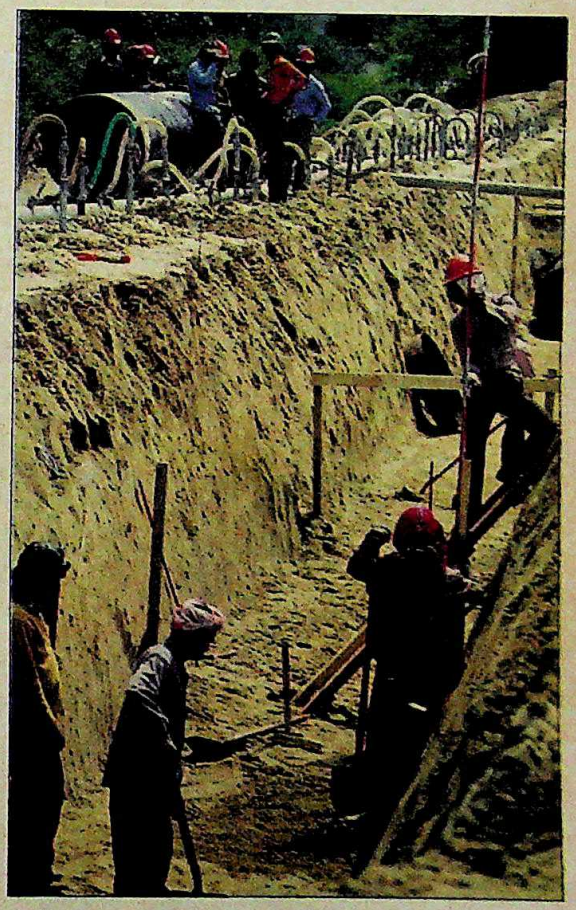
C.L. Verma, chairman, Continental Construction—which claims it is owed nearly one-third of the total amount of money due to all Indian construction companies—wants the Indian Government to persuade the Export-Import Bank of India and the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation to partially compensate private firms who have exported projects to Iraq. "Today we don't have funds to bid for new projects and our company's turnover is stagnant," he laments.

Opinions differ on whether Indian workers will return to Iraq and Kuwait after the war is over and reconstruction begins. One view is that things will be hunky-dory because of the country's traditional close links with these countries. Another opinion is that Indian firms will face stiffer competition in bagging contracts in the future.

For the time being, these questions are only of academic interest. Of the 9,000 Indian workers in Iraq, barely a hundred remained by the second week of February. Of the 1.7 lakh Indians in Kuwait, 1.5 lakh had been evacuated by the end of October. At present, an estimated 8,000 Indians are still believed to be in Kuwait and Indian diplomats are uncertain about their whereabouts. For the persons who remain, it is still a matter of survival. For those who got away, the question is one of finding a new source of livelihood to survive. —

PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA
with bureau reports

■ Indian workers in the Gulf: uncertain future



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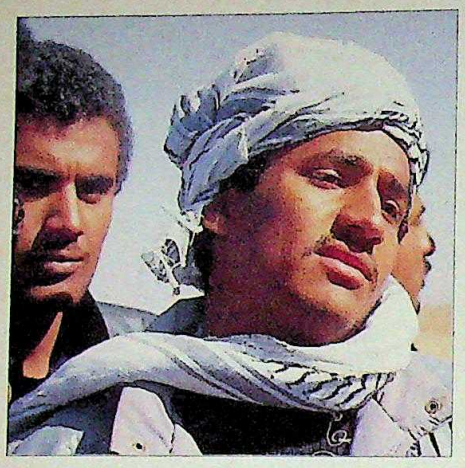
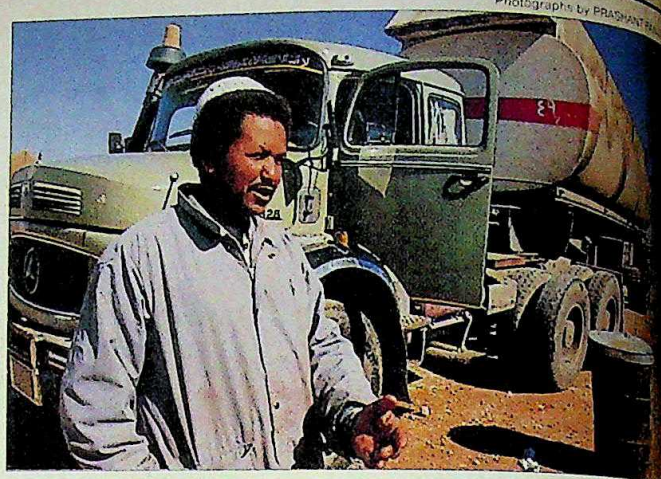
Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



■ Cadet Shuja Ali Saleh, a Yemeni trainee



■ Issa Mohammed, a Sudanese tanker driver

"Nothing survives the bombing, houses, night clubs, mosques."

"When you take the coupons to the shops, they say 'how can we get food'? All the trucks are bombed."

IRAQ

Anguish, Anger And Destruction

Escaping refugees bring with them horrific tales of devastation, deprivation and endless misery.

EVEN as the first rays of the sun break through the early morning clouds, two convoys head in the opposite direction through the desolate, Mackenna's Gold landscape of the Great Syrian Desert. Both are heading for the same point: the Al Ruweished checkpost marking the beginning of the no man's land between Jordan and Iraq.

Hundreds of expatriates make the harrowing 550-km nightly drive on the deathtrap that is the Baghdad-Amman highway to escape the horrors of incessant bombing, shortages and virtual starvation. From the other end, scores of international newsmen land up at Al Ruweished waiting to glean the only first-hand accounts available to the outside world of the latest situation in war-ravaged Iraq.

The refugees come in overloaded buses, trucks, cars with Kuwait number-plates and even on board the giant, 22-wheel tankers that ferry Iraqi crude to Jordan in defiance of the UN sanctions and have been the American bombers' favourite targets. You have to somehow get out of Iraq, no matter what the risks involved, and even if you have to spend several nights under flimsy tents in subzero desert nights. "We haven't eaten for three days. The cold is killing. But by the grace of Allah, we are alive," says Mohammed Deedar Ahmed Khwaza, 40, who left his Bombay slum to work at a poultry farm near Baghdad.

With him also are fellow workers Salim Sultan Saudagar, 35, of Bombay and Zakrul Haq of Unnao in Uttar Pradesh. Like the others—the Sudanese, Yemenis, Palestinians, Jordanians and Vietnamese—they too paint a harrowing picture of the country they have left behind. "There is nothing left. No bridges, no factories, no electricity, water or food. For a dinar (Rs 65) you may get two rotis so hard that a dog wouldn't eat them. You have to soak them in water first," says Khwaza. The tired workers recounted the night the bombers pounded to dust a cement factory near the poultry farm.

Of all places in Iraq, nowhere is the pounding worse than in Basra, the port city and supposedly the headquarters of the Republican Guard, the navy and the high command of the Iraqi Kuwait Theatre of Operations (KTO). And who could have witnessed it more closely than the Yemeni trainees at the Iraqi Naval College. "At night bombs fall all of the sudden. They came like hail," says

GULF DIARY

HYPE AND HATE

IT isn't Christie's and the piece on auction is not a priceless antique. It is a part of the wing of an American F-16 shot down by Iraqi missiles which was presented by the residents of Trebeil, an Iraqi border town, to the inmates of a Palestinian refugee camp at Wahidat near Amman. It is being auctioned to raise money to buy toys for Iraqi children. Thousands milling at the entrance of the Wahidat club. "For decades all we've heard is news of disasters, now there's something to celebrate," says Fahid Al Bayyari, a Palestinian, as he breaks into the "Auction Hall".

The hall resounds with the Palestinian warcry, *Bil Kimawi Ya Saddam* (Use your chemical weapons, Saddam). There is silence as the olive green piece enters.

The bid begins at 1,000 Jordanian dinars (Rs 28,000). Finally the hammer comes down at 21,500 Jordanian dinars (Rs 7 lakh). The proud owner

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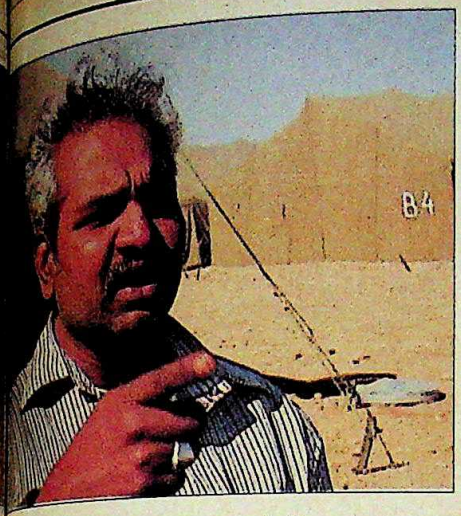

Deedar Ahmed Khwaza, an Indian worker

"There is nothing left. No bridges, factories, electricity, water, or food."

Cadet Shuja Ali Saleh, 22, perhaps referring to the B-52s on carpet bombing raids. "Nothing survives. Houses, night clubs, mosques."

Saleh and the other cadets confirm that the Iraqi vessels have almost all been destroyed. Twenty-one-year-old Mohammed Ahmed Saeed says: "You see rubble and burnt vehicles all over. It makes me so angry with the Arab leaders siding with the western aggressors."

Anil Vij, an executive in a construction company based in Basra, says the bombing is by and large surgical. The Iraqi Army moved a few helicopters into the compound of the Southern Oil Company in Basra and the next day the aircraft destroyed the building. S.P. Kundra, an executive in an Indian construction company in Baghdad says all the telegraph and telephone exchanges have been wiped out. And little food is available.

Ali Adam Al Ghazali, 28, a Sudanese motor mechanic lived in Baghdad quite happily until it became a ghost city overnight. "Everyone fled to the villages. There is nothing in the city now, no water, power or food. People were just beginning to recover from the eight-year war when this began," he says now on his way back to Sudan and starvation. But Hayat Ahmed, a 30-year-old mother of five, is happy to get out. Also for her husband Issa Mohammed, 41, who has been doing the dangerous tanker runs between Baghdad and Amman, "too many died in my neighbourhood". Recalls Hayat: "People are getting fed up, especially the women. They say, why has this man pushed us into this war? What does Kuwait mean for us?" The main problem is not even fear of death but shortage of food. "You get coupons, but when you take them to the shop they say, 'how can we get food'? All the trucks are getting bombed."

Her tanker-driver husband has called it a day after several runs running the gauntlet of low-flying F-16s. Nearly 40 tankers have already been destroyed on the road and the wages for drivers for each run have gone up fourfold from 50 Jordanian dinars to 200 (Rs 5,600). "Now drivers are refusing to go at any price," he says as he bundles his family and its leftover belongings in the truck.

The bombings have etched fear even in the children too. Nine-year-old Hand, a Sudanese, recalls her fear: "Planes come at night. Then there is noise and the beds shake, all my friends cry. They all want to run away." But there is no place for them to run to. They are Iraqis.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Al Ruweished

Nael Al Qasrawi, an Amman businessman, who hopes to build a collection. The Saddamsonian Air and Space Museum in the making will rival Washington's Smithsonian.

EYE FOR AN EYE

That's not all. There is evidence of a growing Saddam cult on the streets. In downtown Amman and in the Palestinian camps a hot selling item is a $100 bill with a difference: a smiling Saddam has replaced the grim visage of Benjamin Franklin. Moreover, Saddam posters are now passe as the new hit is one showing an American Tomahawk missile heading for Baghdad and a Al Hussain (Scud) towards Tel Aviv. The inscription: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

The Scud, cardboard models of which are a must for any demonstration, has become the favourite mascot of pro-Saddam Arabs. It is shown devastating the enemy, aimed at George Bush's neck or the Torah or the Star of David. A favourite lapel badge reads: "Israel is cancer, Al Hussain's the answer." Outside the Iraqi Embassy people queue up to collect lapel badges and posters of Saddam. Osama Jarrar says he sells hundreds of posters each day at his shop. "Saddam is popular as he fights for his honour. Let the Americans kill him now, there will be 200 more Saddams."

Auction of an F-16 wing part; and (right) protestors with dummy Scuds

CONFUSED LOYALTY

In such a confused situation loyalties can get mixed up. Next to Amman's Intercontinental Hotel, the owner of "Uncle Sam's Restaurant" insured himself after the war began by pasting portraits of Saddam on his windows. Last week as a news photographer stopped to photograph "Uncle Sam's Restaurant" with Saddam's posters, the owner rushed out and ripped "Uncle Sam" from the signboard. Now it is just a "restaurant" with Saddam posters.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

Collection, Haridwar

An artist's impression of the time when you still won't have to look beyond Incab cables.

oundation Chennai and eGangotri

There will be a time when solid propellant school buses will come to pick up children.

A time when you'll go for picnics to Venus.

A time when Incab cables will still be around.

Because we, at Incab, have been anticipating the future of cables.

That's the reason why we've developed over 4,000 varieties of cables to meet even the most specialised requirements.

Our R & D laboratories are recognised for studies in cable technology by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

And, our tie-ups with world leaders like BICC plc of UK, Ericsson AB of Sweden, and Windings Inc. of USA ensure that we bring you the best international cable technology as well.

Using this technology, we've developed the conventional range of cables for power generation and distribution and cables for specialised applications in defence, electronic digital communication systems, oil rigs, rural electrification, space research and more.

Small wonder then that we have won national awards for outstanding export performance, year after year.

What's more, we're already working on exciting developments for the future – Extra High Tension XLPE and fibre optic cables, for instance.

So you could put it this way: We've already seen the future, and you can be sure we'll be there.

INCAB

WE'LL BE THERE

INCAB INDUSTRIES LIMITED

9, HARE STREET, CALCUTTA 700 001

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NATIONAL POLITICS

PULLINGA

By INDERJIT BADHWAR and PRABHU CHAWLA

EVERY significant political indicator is that the Congress(I) has started making a determined bid to form a government at the Centre. It is yet unclear whether the party will do so by risking a mid-term poll or by grabbing power through exploiting splits in the ruling Janata Dal(S) and engendering defections from V.P. Singh's Janata Dal.

But it is clear the Congress(I) is working to a plan in which the Chandra Shekhar Government is likely to be the first casualty. The alliance of convenience in which the Congress(I) and its allies with 211 MPs propped up the breakaway Janata Dal faction of 54 MPs exists today in a political twilight zone as Rajiv Gandhi's party tries to force a realignment at the Centre, from which it hopes to derive maximum advantage even as uncertainty clouds the prospects of a fresh general election.

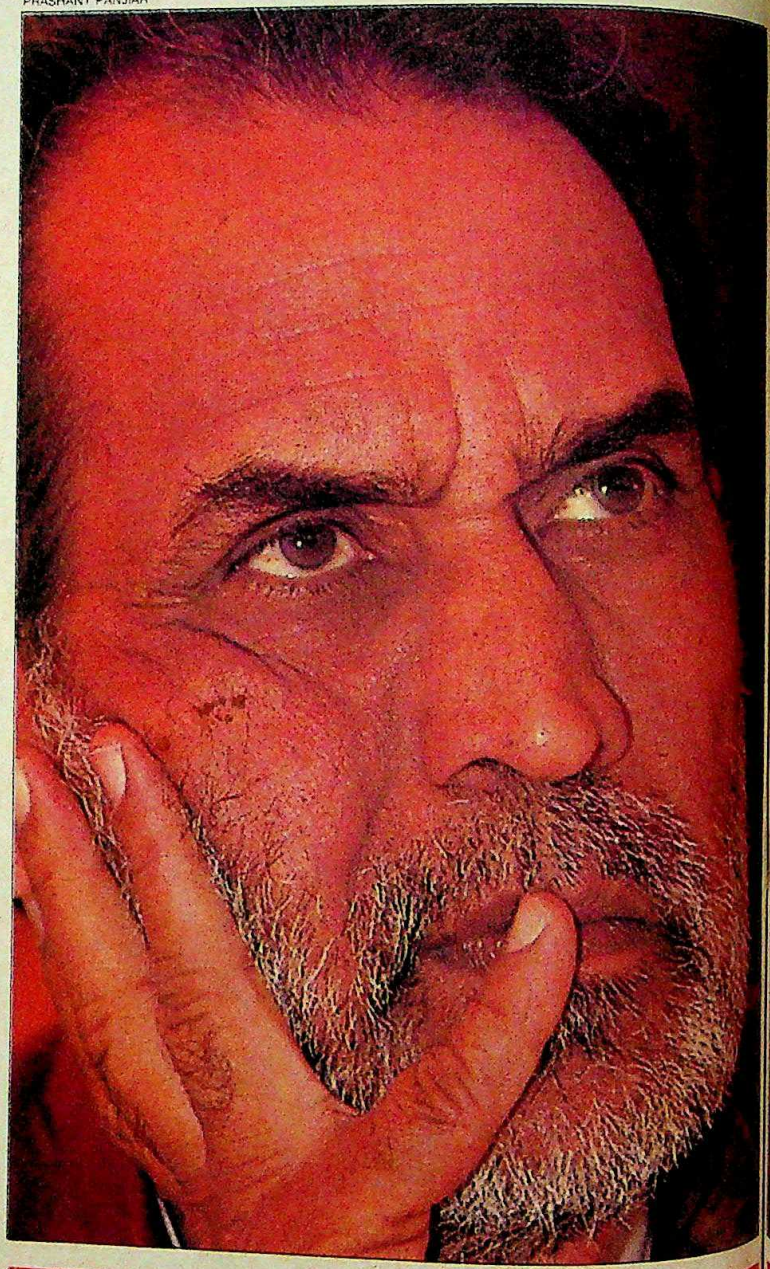
The Congress(I) is following a strategy of distancing itself from the Chandra Shekhar Government. It believes the circumstances are right because of dissensions within the Chandra Shekhar camp, and the moment is opportune because of dramatic alterations in the political landscape. Chandra Shekhar knows this. Devi Lal knows this. V.P. Singh's Jan Morcha dissidents know it. And as the game is played out the politicians—with the spectre of elections haunting them—have begun to scurry about seeking new allies, political shelters, and marriages of convenience.

THE DISTANCING GAME

STAND BACK TO ATTACK

AND the Congress(I) is calling its shots according to a carefully conceived plan. On January 31 a Congress(I) Working Committee (CWC) meeting chaired by Rajiv resolved the party should not only begin the process of pulling away from the Chandra Shekhar Government but also attack it publicly. The standard-bearers for this ground offensive were stalwarts like Sitaram Kesari, P.V. Narasimha Rao, M.L. Fotedar, H.K.L. Bhagat, and V.N. Gadgil. And last fortnight, the party

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Chandra Shekhar's devil-may-care style of functioning, in which he has ignored the Congress(I), has bruised the egos of Rajiv and his partymen.

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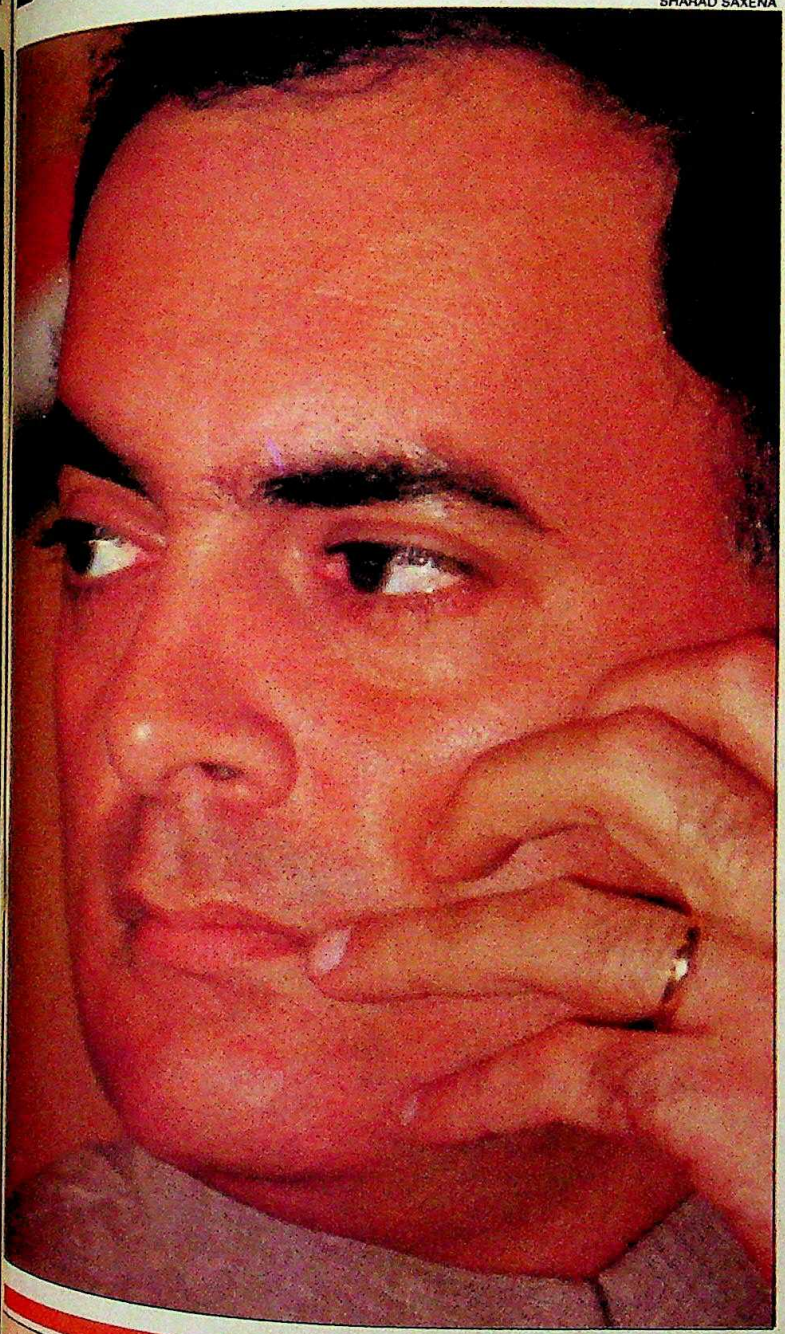
GAPART

SHARAD SAXENA



Rajiv's Congress(I) has begun to distance itself from Chandra Shekhar and has decided to make a determined bid to form the government.

swung into action in a veritable blitzkrieg of criticism against the Government designed to demonstrate that the Congress(I) will not accept the status of a pedigreed dog being wagged by the skimpy tail of a mongrel. Some of the clear signals, often insulting in character, came from Rajiv Gandhi himself.

► Rajiv unilaterally backed out of a much-publicised commitment to fly with Chandra Shekhar for a function in Karnataka.

► Earlier he welshed on another promise: a joint visit to Punjab on the 100th birth anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai. Party General Secretary Balram Jakhar was sent instead.

► Rajiv issued blistering statements on Chandra Shekhar holding talks with Simranjit Singh Mann and his refusal to drop the five ministers disqualified from the Lok Sabha by the Speaker.

► Party spokesman Gadgil held a press conference and lambasted the Government on the rise in prices.

► Ten Congress(I) MPs—known as the "voice brigade" because of their full-throated defence of Rajiv any time he comes under attack in Parliament (they include S.S. Ahluwalia and Ratnakar Pandey)—demonstrated against Chandra Shekhar's Gulf war policy—the refuelling issue—outside his Race Course Road residence.

► Most dramatically, on February 6, Rajiv met President R. Venkataraman for 80 minutes in Rashtrapati Bhavan. Political aide Fotedar was present for the first half of the meeting. The word trickling down from Rajiv's aides is that their party chief was severely critical of the prime minister for his stand on the Gulf issue which appeared to deviate from the nation's policy of non-alignment as well as his refusal to budge on the issue of dropping the five disqualified ministers. Rajiv stressed that even though his party had given an oral commitment to the President last November to support Chandra Shekhar for a year, it was premised on Chandra Shekhar desisting from taking any action that would radically depart from the traditional policies of the Congress(I). Now that Chandra Shekhar was taking a different tack on policies such as non-alignment, the Congress(I) support for him could not be

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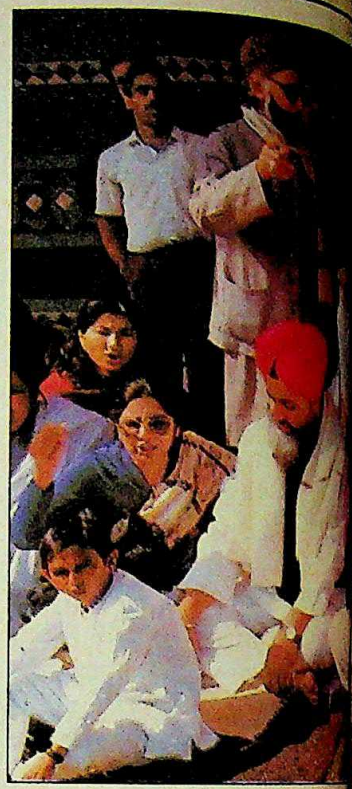
taken for granted for any specified period. And because the President had himself talked about the desirability of coalition governments during his Republic Day address, Rajiv's visit led to the additional ominous speculation that he was getting ready to ditch the Government and take charge at the Centre with the help of Janata Dal(S) dissidents.

▶ Last week the President gave a fresh indication that he was actively involved in shaping a possible realignment at the Centre—in virtually kingmaker fashion—when he invited Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv for a joint meeting to listen to their grievances. From all indications he gave greater weightage to the complaints enumerated by the Congress(I) chief. Then on February 11, soon after attending a heated meeting of the Congress(I)'s Political Affairs Committee, Rajiv met the President again for a long 90-minute session. Apparently he made it known to the President that he would like to form the Government, but the President appeared committed to the idea of a national government which included the BJP, a proposal that has already been rejected by both the BJP and V.P. Singh. But the President believes that a national government would provide greater stability than a poll that may lead to another hung Parliament.



Congress(I) MPs demonstrating against refuelling outside the prime minister's residence

CONGRESS COMPULSIONS

DIMINISHING RETURNS

THE million dollar question remains: but why now? There are three main reasons. First, Chandra Shekhar's unexpectedly independent style of functioning ignoring the Congress(I), his main prop, right from the beginning when he formed his cabinet without consulting Rajiv Gandhi, has badly bruised the egos of Rajiv and his partymen. Second, Congressmen fear that Chandra Shekhar's Gulf policy, which appears anti-Muslim while that community is overwhelmingly pro-Saddam, is alienating the Muslim vote bank into which V.P. Singh has been making steady

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Soothing Talk, Little Action

THE Chandra Shekhar Government has won public appreciation for what appears as a surprisingly forthright approach to national issues. A hastily patched up minority government not expected to survive more than a few weeks in power is today offering to talk directly to the militants in Kashmir and Punjab, keeping the VHP and the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) together at the negotiating table, calming the turbulence caused by the Mandal report, bringing in much needed cash through IMF loans, and taking a bold if controversial stand on the Gulf war. With his soothing talk, disregard for stifling conventions and readiness to compromise with cantankerous elements within his own party, Chandra Shekhar appears serenely in command of the country. Unfortunately, initiatives are sorely lacking in domestic and foreign policy.

TROUBLE SPOTS: SMOOTH TALK, NO ACTION

Punjab: The much heralded policy shift of agreeing to hold talks with militants has not gone beyond a meeting with Akali Dal chief Simranjit Singh Mann who actually wrested the initiative from the prime minister by making him accept a memorandum outlining a buffer Sikh state between India and Pakistan and slandering the Indian national movement with quotes from Winston Churchill. The talks were promptly decried by several Sikh militant groups. This has not been followed by preparations for elections.

Kashmir: The prime minister claims he is committed to reviving the political process and is holding closed-door talks with a cross-section of the Kashmir leadership. Although the governor has been asked to assist this process within the state, National Conference leader Dr Farooq Abdullah is already complaining of the Government's non-implementation of some of its own decisions— like involving political representatives and prominent citizens in district advisory committees to advise administration officials on local affairs. Instead, after his first meeting with the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Chandra Shekhar said it was "understandable" that he would aid militants in the region (just when America had asked Pakistan to cease meddling in the area) and the Government claims of incidents of surrender by militants are juxtaposed with the increasing use of rockets and mortar attacks on security posts and administration buildings throughout the Valley.

Assam: While army action against the United Liberation Front of Assam flopped, it restored the morale of an administration weary of receiving contradictory orders from the different factions of the then ruling Asom Gana Parishad government which was ac-

Shekhar with Mann

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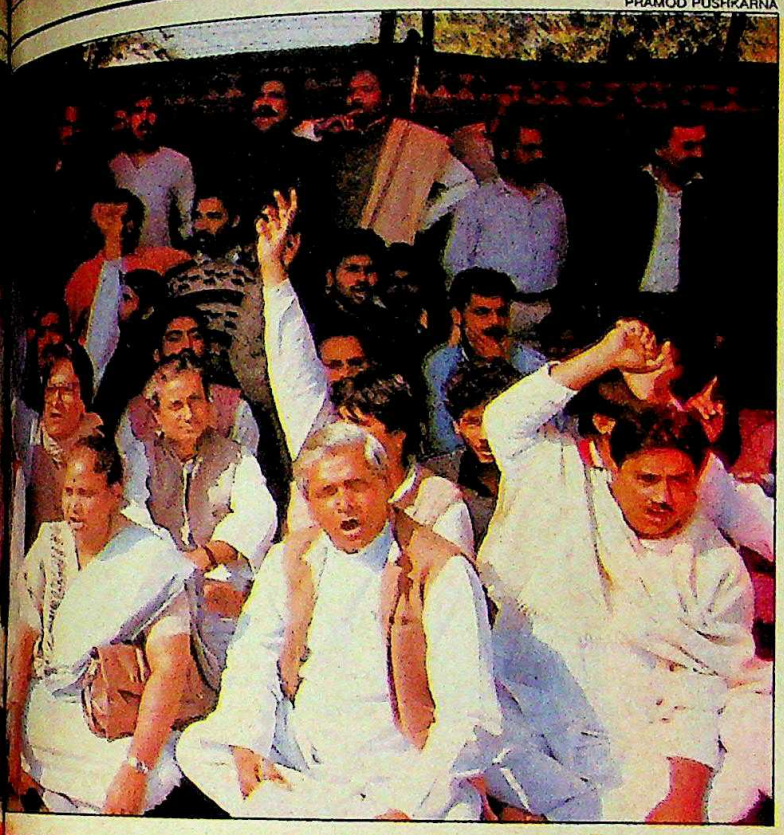
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



inroads by exploiting the Gulf issue. And third, the Bofors case has not been swept under the rug as the Congress(I) had hoped. Instead, the Government reactivated the moribund CBI inquiry and sent new letters rogatory to the Swiss Government to expedite matters.

Congress(I) rank-and-filers are now demanding that the party should no longer remain a bystander but become politically active and help shape the nation's politics to its advantage. Therefore, the major resentment expressed at the CWC meeting was that Congress(I) MPs were being made responsible for the actions of the Government without having the power to influence its course and decisions to their party's benefit.

THE GAMEPLAN

BAITING DISSIDENTS

THE Congress(I) arithmetic *(see page 39)* of forming a government is not complicated. Its group already totals 211 MPs in the Lok Sabha. It needs about 257 for a majority. It hopes

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used of being hand-in-glove with the extremists. But the absence of effective political dialogue with the Centre has stalled the political resolution of the state's diverse problems.

COMMUNALISM: SIMMERING DISCONTENT

The VHP is preparing for the second phase of the Ayodhya agitation which includes a gherao of Parliament. Although both the VHP and the AIBMAC are still at the negotiating table, the VHP says the prime minister is only buying time until elections and Muslim leaders privately acknowledge increasing Muslim alienation from the mainstream political leadership.

ECONOMY: GOOD NEWS

Two successful IMF loans, the Compensatory and Contingency Financial Fund for $1.02 billion (double the original estimate indicating a very successful Indian representation) and a standby loan of $780 million and some IMF-imposed discipline in the form of increased custom and excise duties and a surcharge on income tax brought the budget deficit as a percentage of the GDP down. From 8.9 per cent in 1989-90 it fell to 8.3 per cent in 1990 and to a low 6.5 per cent in 1991-92. We may also see a curtailing of fertiliser subsidies, which no politician has dared touch for decades. The Government has also drawn up a contingency plan for dealing with the Gulf war. What it had not foreseen was panic buying which raised the price of several essentials by some 20 to 30 per cent in two weeks.

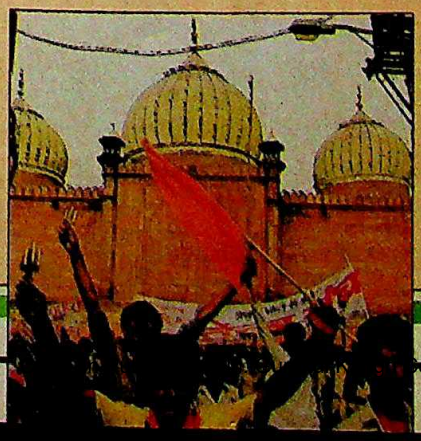
BOFORS: BACK ON TRACK

The prime minister's lack of interest in Bofors ("it is a job for a sub-inspector", "it's a pathological preoccupation with politicians") preceded Delhi High Court judge M.K. Chawla's *suo moto* directive that the CBI show-cause why the Bofors investigations should not be quashed. Junior lawyers assisting the newly-appointed Additional Solicitor-General K.T.S. Tulsi resigned when it was clear that he seemed more intent on tearing down the case rather than defending it. Tulsi was replaced by Solicitor-General Anand Dev Giri, who appealed against the Chawla judgement, the case was transferred to the Supreme Court and two IGPs were later sent to Europe to follow up on the Bofors investigations.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS: A MIXED SUCCESS

The Government won the goodwill of both antagonists when it initially criticised but did not condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It then followed the international community in refusing to link the Palestinian issue with the Iraqi aggression and acquiescing to the US military attack against Iraq. But by permitting the US Air Force planes to refuel at Indian airports without consulting either the Cabinet or national parties—the decision was taken by a prime minister sublimely ignorant of its future implications, according to irritated MEA sources—Chandra Shekhar faced public chastisement. He also faced the humiliation of having Congress(I) leader Rajiv Gandhi lecture him on how to forge peace initiatives in the region. The policy is now under review.

—SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR



Hindu militants protest at Jama Masjid

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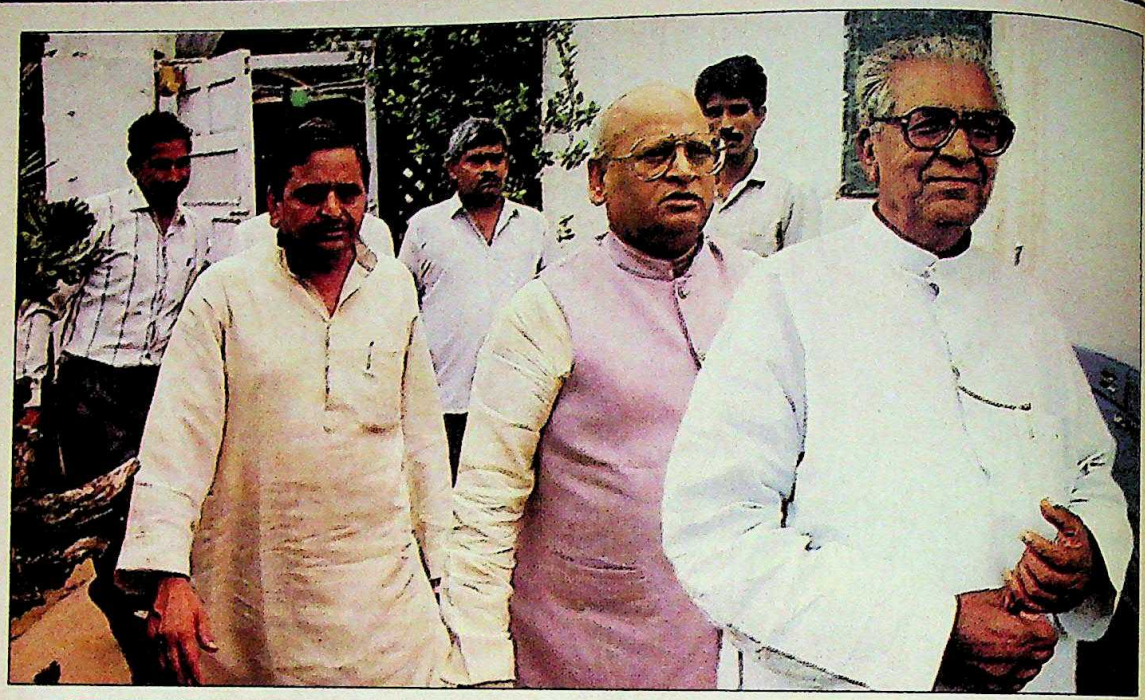
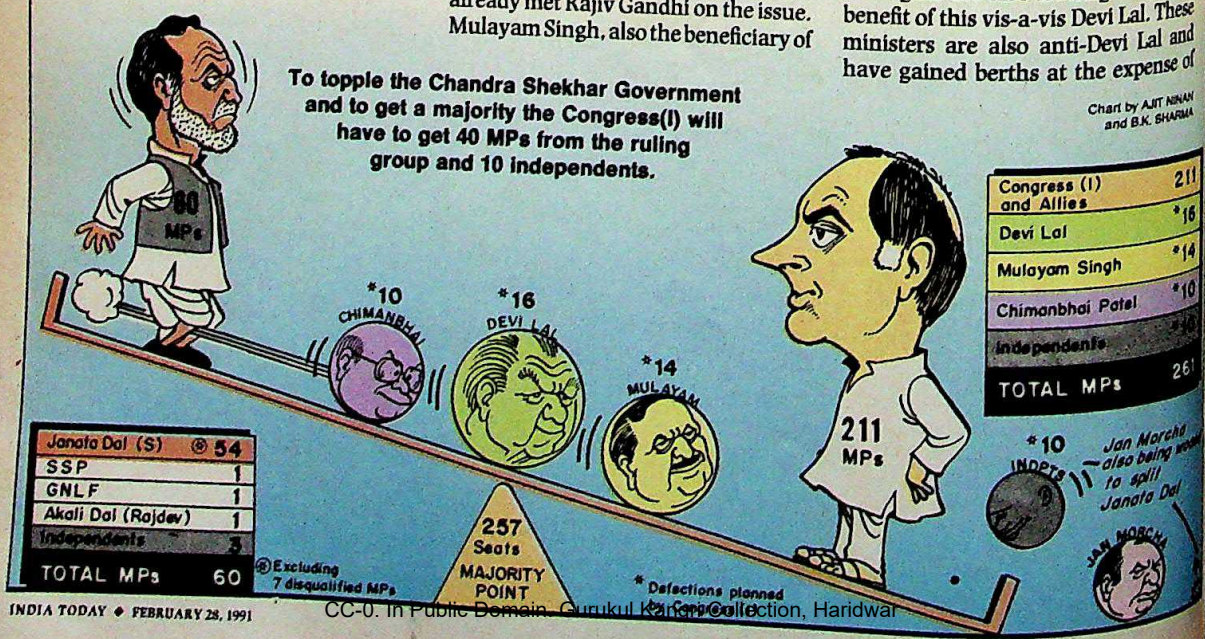


The Congress(I) is targeting the Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chimanbhai Patel and Devi Lal factions to undermine the Janata Dal(S) from within.

to accomplish this by targeting three factions within the Janata Dal(S) in order to get their 40 MPs to join the Congress(I): Devi Lal, Chimanbhai Patel and Mulayam Singh Yadav. Of the 14 Independents backing Chandra Shekhar, it expects at least 10 to switch allegiance. Of the remaining, two are expected to continue to back Chandra Shekhar, while the other two may keep their options open.

Chimanbhai, dependent as he is on 32 Congress(I) MLAs to keep his government afloat in Gujarat, is an easy bet, Congress(I) strategists say. He has already met Rajiv Gandhi on the issue. Mulayam Singh, also the beneficiary of Congress(I) support, was openly praising Rajiv Gandhi and advocating closer ties with the Congress(I) at the party convention in Ballia.

That leaves the Tau. In repeatedly demanding the resignation of the five disqualified ministers, Congress(I) strategists are also looking at the side benefit of this vis-a-vis Devi Lal. These ministers are also anti-Devi Lal and have gained berths at the expense of



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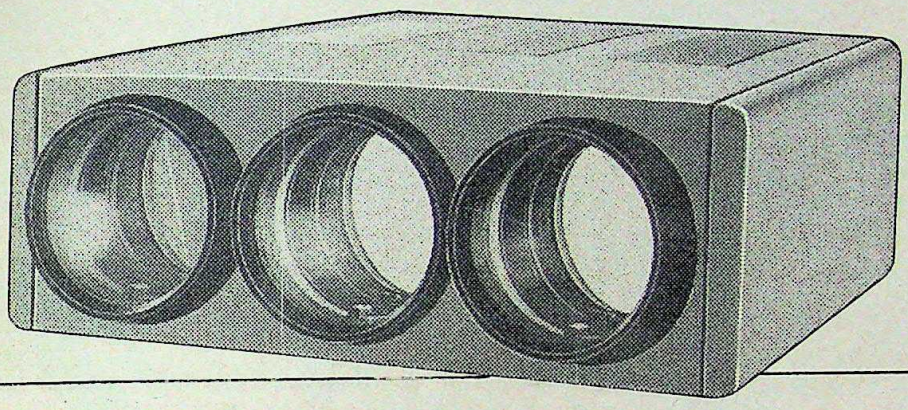

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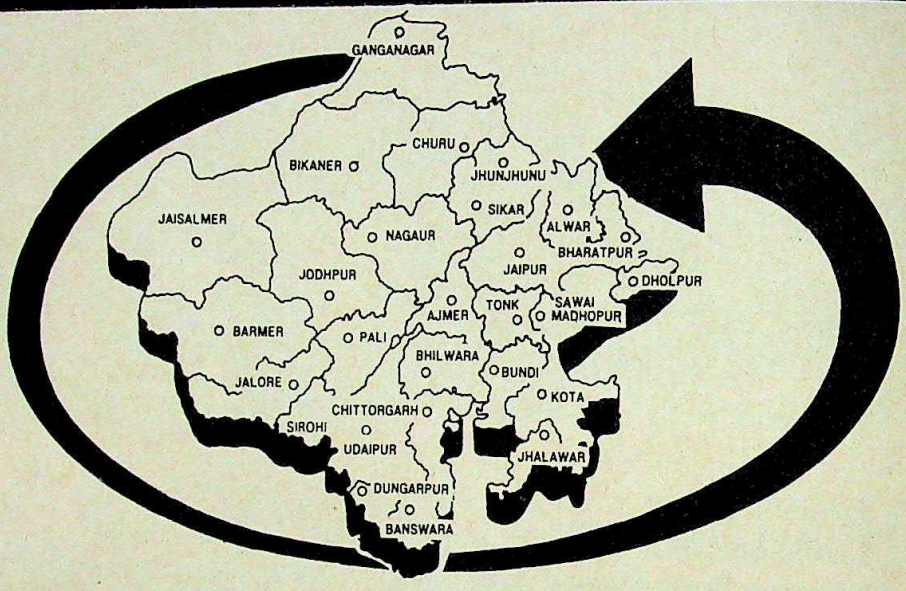
Sales Tax Holiday for 11 years to industries in Rajasthan



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The Congress(I) Working Committee recently arrived at a consensus to pull away from the Government, and attack it publicly.

Devi Lal's men. Shukla, Shakeel-ur-Rehman, Bhagye Govardhan are some former Jan Morcha adherents.

A significant section of prominent Congressmen—including Vasant Sathe, Shiv Shankar and Dinesh Singh—favour Rajiv forming a government after splitting the Janata Dal(S). Prominent members of the Chandra Shekhar group—Devi Lal's son Ranjit, as well as Jagdeep Dhankar and Chand Ram—are in close touch with Congress(I) leaders like Fotedar to discuss the shape of any future realignment. In fact, some 25 MPs belonging to various Janata Dal(S) factions have already approached the Congress(I) for formal admission into the party. But while Ranjit is hobnobbing with the Congress(I), elder brother Om Prakash Chautala remains a Chandra Shekhar loyalist, and may act as a brake on Devi Lal's defection plans. Devi Lal and company also have their own compulsions in pulling away from the Government. The Jat chieftain made known his unhappiness with Chandra Shekhar on his return from Oslo when he fired off a letter to the prime minister—in the same fashion as he had started doing with V.P. Singh before he was sacked from the government—expressing his grievances in a number of areas.

THE TAU'S COMPULSIONS

SEEKING A NEW ISLAND

BUT the real motivation in the Devi Lal camp is not the litany of grievances expressed in the letter—which include denial of party posts and other lucrative government assignments to their followers. At stake is a more basic compulsion. With the fall of the V.P. Singh government, the anti-Congress(I) bulwark they had helped build has collapsed. The Janata Dal(S) is not a viable or winning party and V.P. Singh's Janata Dal will not accommodate them.

Therefore, with the Congress(I) now readying to pull the rug from under the Government, they are looking for another anchor, and there is none except for the Congress(I). But a question mark remains on Devi Lal. He may not be acceptable to the Congress(I) because of the negative baggage he carries—in fact the Haryana Congress(I) has already opposed his entry. What the Congress(I) may shoot for are Devi Lal's MPs, sans Devi Lal. On the flip side the Tau too may not want to submerge himself in the Congress(I) ocean, preferring egoistically to retain his independent identity.

Ideally, Rajiv would want a stable government which he can provide only if he has a clear majority of at least 20 MPs. In order to achieve this more comfortable majority, his party has also been in touch with V.P. Singh's sidelined Jan Morcha dissidents—Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan—to lead at least 10 more MPs out of Singh's flock. But this is not easy. This is because while only 18 MPs are required to split the 54-MP-strong Janata Dal(S), no less than 28 MPs would have to walk out of V.P. Singh's camp of 78 MPs in order to avoid the anti-defection law. And this number has not yet materialised.

Another option that was actively explored by Rajiv Gandhi was to pitch for the support of the Left parties with their 52 MPs instead of the Janata Dal defectors. But the Left, after its re-

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sounding success in the recent Kerala district council polls, is in no mood to oblige.

SHEKHAR HITS BACK

DIVORCE OR STAY PUT

BUT it's not as if Chandra Shekhar has just been sitting laid back in Bhondsi watching the world pass by, content to have achieved his lifetime ambition of becoming prime minister, if even only once. The one principle to which he sticks is that while he may compromise and form a coalition government with the Congress(I), he will never join that party.

He has been trying to ward off the threat to his government by wooing his own flock with more meal-tickets, and by being soft to the Congress(I).

On February 7, he convened a "reconciliation dinner meeting" at his house attended by Mulayam, Devi Lal, Chimanbhai and Chautala. The Tau complained. Chandra Shekhar listened, and agreed to drop the five disqualified ministers and accommodate loyalists of other factions in a cabinet expansion likely to occur before the budget session. He also suggested closer consultations with the Congress(I) and asked that the Congress(I)-Janata Dal(S) coordination committee consisting of Chimanbhai Patel, P.V. Narasimha Rao, and Petroleum Minister S.P. Malviya be activated. The next day an apologetic Chimanbhai rushed to Rajiv's residence.

Rajiv then had a rare meeting with Chandra Shekhar at the prime minister's residence. Chandra Shekhar was blunt. An insider describes Chandra Shekhar's conversation with Rajiv: "You decided to marry us. But it isn't a proper marriage. We can fight in the bedroom but not in public. But if it cannot work out let us get a divorce."

He pointed out to Rajiv that the implications of the Congress(I)'s current stance were serious. The Government, he said, was paralysed because any initiative that it takes in Punjab, Assam, foreign policy or the bureaucracy stands jeopardised by Congress opposition *(see box)*. Rajiv listened politely but made no commitment other than to promise that the attacks may be toned down.

But what followed was neither a divorce nor any new understanding. The attacks, particularly on Chandra Shekhar's Gulf policy, continued with the promise of a massive anti-government demonstration by the Youth Congress(I).

Rajiv hopes a Congress(I)-Jayalalitha win in Tamil Nadu would create a pan-Indian pro-Congress wave.

CONGRESS(I)'S ADVANTAGE

THE ENEMIES ARE DOWN

WHY is the Congress(I) taking this tack now in such a relentless fashion while it is still uncertain of poll prospects? As the Marxists love to put it, the "objective conditions" have changed in the last four months. The Mandal and masjid agitations that had floored the Congress(I) are relatively quiet. Rajiv has also proved by ousting the V.P. Singh government that he has the capacity to dislodge a government and break a party.

Also he is better placed than ever before to dictate terms to the states and to his party. Hostile governments in Tamil Nadu and Assam have been tamed with the ouster of M. Karunanidhi and P.K. Mahanta. Mulayam Singh Yadav, once a strong foe, is singing the Congress(I)'s tune in Uttar Pradesh. Chimanbhai, dependent on the support of 32 Congress MLAs for his survival in Gujarat, is a model of pro-Congress(I) obsequiousness. No longer is Rajiv faced with the spectre of hostile chief ministers with the anointment of docile ones in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. And his party is already calling the shots on Punjab, ULFA and increasingly on foreign policy.

This is, Congress(I) stalwarts say, the ideal groundwork for switching to real power without holding an election. But all the best laid plans of mice and men are not without their hitches. There's always that undefinable thing called public opinion. Rajiv Gandhi can not appear to be unfair to Chandra Shekhar. The prime minister's image is not tainted and he has not done anything that would justify the drastic action of pulling him down precipitously.

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PRASHANT PANJIAR

The recent actions of President R. Venkataraman are a clear indication that he is involved in shaping a possible realignment at the Centre.

THE CAUTIOUS OPTION

WAIT FOR TAMIL NADU POLL

ACTUALLY, even on the issue of dismissing the popularly elected government of Tamil Nadu—one of the prime minister's worst blunders—there has been no groundswell of public antipathy to Chandra Shekhar or his government. If anything, the Congress(I)'s image has taken a bit of a beating.

So even with everything going the Congress(I)'s way—its very real ability to topple Chandra Shekhar and form a government by taking defectors into the Congress(I)—one option being explored by Rajiv is: wait until the next election in Tamil Nadu slated for April. If the Congress(I)-Jayalalitha alliance wins big, it would show that the Congress(I) is capable of winning even after dislodging a popularly elected government. A victory in Tamil Nadu could signal a public wave towards the Congress(I) and sound the starting gun for even larger defections towards the party. In this case the Congress(I) could bring down the Government and ride the Tamil Nadu electoral wave in the next general election.

THE SNEAKY OPTION

COUP MINUS RESPONSIBILITY

BUT Rajiv's aides say that he would prefer to avoid the label of government-wrecker as far as possible. And they suggest he is exploring yet another scenario for the budget session starting February. Many money bills are expected to be introduced. And Congress(I) operatives anticipate that a badly managed Janata Dal(S) will find it difficult to keep its MPs together. The Congress(I) will encourage its sympathisers to abstain from voting on money bills. Even with the full backing of the Congress(I), if a mere 11 MPs of the Chandra Shekhar Government fail to support a money bill, it will fall.

Here, the Congress(I) is able to have its cake and eat it too. It would sponsor the coup without taking responsibility for it. It can then claim that the Government fell not because the Congress(I) wrecked it but because it could not hold its own flock together. This—that non-Congress(I) governments are always unstable—will be the Congress(I)'s main slogan in future polls.

If the Government falls on its own, the President must call the leader of the Opposition to form the government, an offer that L.K. Advani will decline because the BJP wants a mid-term poll. Then, Rajiv Gandhi, as the leader of the single largest party, would be given a chance.

Indications are that he would form a government, if only to gain the advantage of incumbency before going to the polls. And a poll looks inevitable not only because of the wafer-thin majority that the Congress(I) would enjoy in Parliament, but also because, straddled as the Congress(I) would now be with troublesome factional leaders from various Janata Dal groups, Rajiv would have to seek a fresh mandate in order to forge a more effective majority and diminish the role of mischief-makers in his party.

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JANATA DAL(S)-BJP-JANATA DAL

PREPARING FOR POLLS

At their national conventions the three non-Congress(I) parties took stock of the present political situation and attempted to thrash out their strategies for the next election.

By INDERJIT BADHWAR

LAST fortnight was a time for stock-taking and image-building for major parties that found themselves caught in the maelstrom of this year's world of topsy-turvy politics in which allies turned into antagonists and enemies into partners.

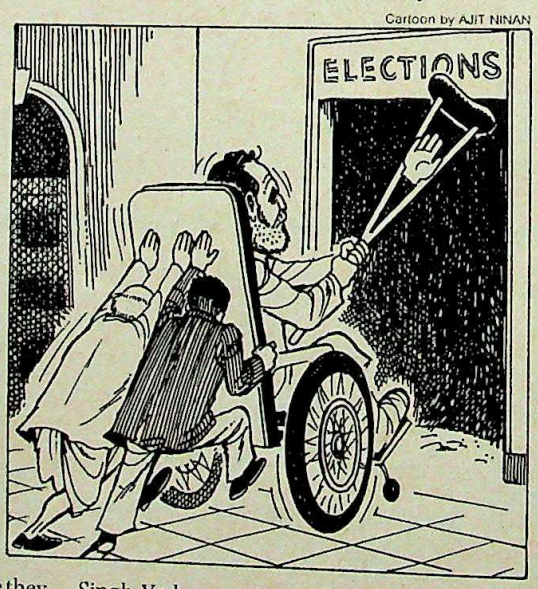
The well-attended party conventions—the BJP in Jaipur, the Janata Dal (S) in Ballia, and the parent Janata Dal in Puri—became the platforms for party leaders to answer questions from rank and filers about their role at the Centre during the premiership of V.P. Singh as well as to flex the muscle of the future strategy of retaining or grabbing power at the Centre.

All three parties had been part of the ruling alliance last year. Today, with the increasing talk of another general election in the air, they are looking at the prospect of multi-angular fights. And as and when they enter the fray they know that they will carry the burden of having to explain to the voting public the role they played in upsetting the national political applecart and ushering in a new round of instability as well as fanning the fires of communalism.

The conventions did not produce any *mea culpas*. The exercise of answering questions from delegates served, conveniently, to justify as well as to cloak in the national interest, their actions of the last few turbulent months.

For the Janata Dal(S), the Ballia jamboree was a testament to the total ideological confusion infusing its ranks. How could this appendage of Lohiaite anti-Congressism now be thriving on Congress(I) support? No answers except for obfuscatory references to the Congress(I)'s staunch socialist and anti-communalist convictions. In fact, the person most loudly eulogising the Congress(I) was none other than its sworn blood enemy, the redoubtable Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Toppling the V.P. Singh government, Janata Dal(S) leaders chirruped, was in the national interest because of the deep divisions caused by the Mandal controversy, but in the next breath they wound up supporting implementation of the reservations policy without any changes. Strategies to survive at the Centre took more time than efforts at building a party organisation. The convention came and went and Janata Dal(S) remained undecided about whether it was an "entity" or a "party".

For the BJP it was time for a symbolic change of guard from L.K. Advani to Murli Manohar Joshi. It blamed not its own withdrawal of support but rather V.P. Singh's lust for power for the collapse of his government. But it was clearheaded, almost to mathematical precision, about its electoral plans. Go it alone. Keep intact the Hindutva base created by the Ayodhya temple agitation while simultaneously expanding it to attract moderate co-religionists by emphasising "Hindu nationalism".

The Janata Dal simply reiterated V.P. Singh's now familiar theme. The party sacrificed the government on "principle", by refusing to compromise with communalists on the Babri Masjid issue and with upper caste reactionaries on the Mandal recommendations. Its election slogan is clear, and being tested for effect at rallies all over the country. In fact, the party convention resembled more a political rally than an organisational meeting.

What stood out throughout the fortnight was that the two parties with the clearest programmes and planks—the BJP and the Janata Dal—know that there's no way they can capture power at the Centre without new elections and so their conventions were heavily oriented towards electoral strategies.

Chandra Shekhar's Janata Dal(S) concentrated on working out how to retain power without going to the electorate. In that sense, its Ballia gathering resembled more a caucus than a convention. It is significant in this context because the Congress(I) has a parallel motive (how to grab power without another election)—that it did not even deem it fit to hold a convention.

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Chandra Shekhar in Ballia

JANATA DAL(S)

Without Direction

Party fails to forge a clear political identity

TWO things characterised the governing party's convention: a grovelling Uriah Heepish gratitude towards the Congress(I) for allowing it to remain in office; and a failure to forge a clear political identity for itself.

The modest tone of the gathering in Devasthali, 30 km from Ballia, was set by Railway Minister Janeshwar Mishra when he told delegates: "We must face the reality of the fact that since we are walking with the help of crutches, we are in no position to take a big political leap." Down-to-earth rhetoric but hardly calculated to fire 10,000 delegates with fervour.

But at least Mishra was being honest when he said: "Up to now we have been a government outfit but now we have to become a political organisation." What happened, however, was that the objective of creating a distinct identity for the party and the pressing task of building an infrastructural sinews was drowned in the business of the obligatory singing of the Congress(I)'s praises.

The only result was an inevitable and insipid two-page "political resolution" which read like a routine statement on the current political situation. And it appeared that it was not in a position to provide any new direction to the country, unsure as it was of its own.

The resolution rather gingerly stated that the Mandal report would be implemented. And was quick to add that its scope would be widened to provide help for the economically backward sections of the forward castes.

It called on party workers to unitedly undertake a mass mobilisation of public opinion for policies which would help India to reach out to "towering heights in the comity of nations". But delegates were left to figure out for themselves what the specific contents of the blandly stated general policies were.

General Secretary Daya Sharan Singh, an MLA, was somewhat more specific: "There are two schools of thought. To strengthen the Janata Dal(S), to fight communalism with the help of all secular and democratic forces. Or to form a common morcha with the communists, the Congress(I) and other like-minded parties." More than this it was difficult to discover.

The main emotion in evidence at the convention was resentment: among top-ranking leaders over Chandra Shekhar's style of functioning; among the growing ranks of dissidents, led by (who else?) Devi Lal, who is griping about being ignored; and among the rank and file that they weren't given enough time to express their views.

The main achievement of the three-day exercise was to project the troika of Shekhar, Devi Lal and Mulayam Singh Yadav—the "trimurti" of the party, as Shekhar frequently intoned. But at the end of the mela, when the shamianas had been dismantled and the chairs cleared, the paradoxical fact remained that the Janata Dal(S) was a governing party but not a political organisation.

—FARZAND AHMED in Devasthali

JANATA DAL

Banking on Backwards

Plans to encash the Mandal and secularism cards

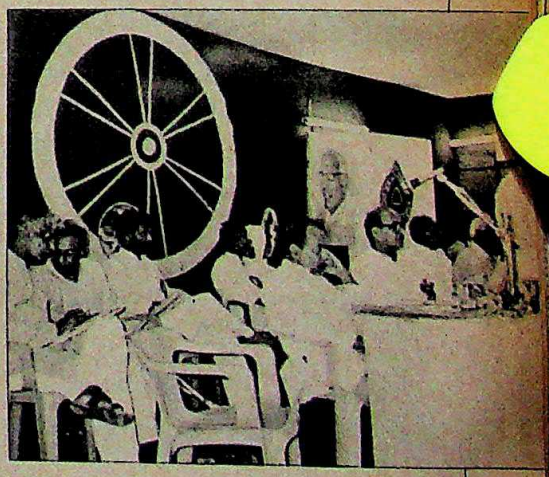
IN the next election the Janata Dal is going to sell the notion of social justice as though it was personally responsible for discovering it. The mood of the convention in the temple town of Puri in Orissa last fortnight was quietly optimistic. The party expects to reap a rich crop of votes from Mandal and mandir—enough to form a coalition government with the Left parties.

The leadership's strategy rests entirely on these two issues and on two groups of voters: the backward classes and the minorities. Said Srikanta Jena, the former Union minister of state in V.P. Singh's government: "The elite and urban vote will be split between the Congress(I) and the BJP. This will allow the Dal to race ahead on the back of the minority and backward class vote."

The Janata Dal's links with the Left parties were heavily underlined. Senior leaders believe the two forces could account for around 250 seats in the Lok Sabha. They were confident about doing well in Bihar and holding their ground in Uttar Pradesh. A slide is expected in the party's showing in Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan but any losses here are expected to be more than offset by gains in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

Having decided on its policies, the Janata Dal used the convention to ram home its secular credentials—the

Party convention in Puri



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convention at Puri was christened "Salabeg Nagar" after a Muslim devotee of Lord Jagannath. And party spokesman Jaipal Reddy kept stressing the by now familiar incantation that its government had sacrificed power for the ideal of secularism.

On reservations, V.P. Singh keeps pushing the logic of his case further and further. He now wants 60 per cent of the party candidates in the next elections to be from the "submerged sections" of society. But a sizeable section of partymen are worried about the advisability of the party putting all its eggs in one basket.

The fear is that the more Singh tilts towards the backward castes, the more he will alienate the rest of the population. Even if the party calculates that it can afford to lose much of the votes in these remaining sections, there is the danger that the whole strategy might backfire if the votes of the backward castes fail to measure up to the levels that are expected.

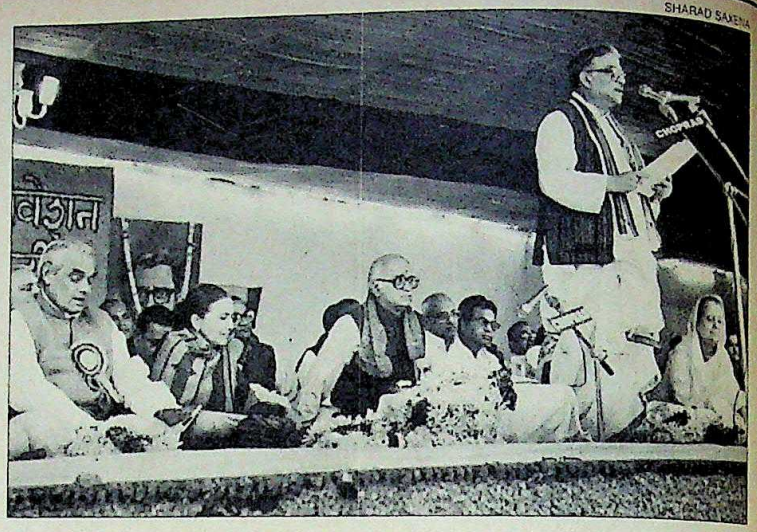
What emerged clearly from the convention was that the Janata Dal sees its principal electoral foes as the Congress(I) and the BJP. The wayward offspring that broke up the family—the Janata Dal(S)—was studiously ignored. If Chandra Shekhar was mentioned at all, it was only as the destroyer of the people's mandate.

The party's main weakness is that it still relies too much on a small group of individuals and has yet to evolve into a cohesive force. The membership drive which should have been completed last December has yet to be taken up seriously while some state units have turned into personal fiefdoms for some partymen.

The convention itself was put together entirely by Orissa Chief Minister Biju Patnaik. It meant that other MPs were relegated to the sidelines as mere bystanders. The absence of Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan and Satpal Malik also fuelled speculation that the erstwhile Jan Morcha group was drifting away from the mainstream of the party, and that there was the possibility of a dissenters' group emerging in the organisation.

There's no mistaking that the Janata Dal is dangerously exposed by But any army knows that even while it is attacking it has to cover its rear. The Janata Dal's dangerously exposed by its exclusive targeting of the backward castes. If its vote bank calculations happen to go awry, it will have nothing to fall back on.

—RUBEN BANERJEE in Puri



SHARAD SAXENA

Joshi addressing the convention

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Expanding the Base

Toning down of Hindutva rhetoric becomes imperative

WHILE the Janata Dal appears content to be a virtually one-issue party, the BJP has realised the political imperative it faces: broaden its support beyond the Ram Mandir issue or stagnate. After weeks of intense private discussions, its convention at Jaipur in Rajasthan committed itself to adding Hindu nationalism to aggressive Hinduism.

Through this combination President Murli Manohar Joshi and L.K. Advani hope to expand the party's electoral base without eroding the support it won over the Ayodhya campaign.

The method chosen for promoting Hindu nationalism is to focus on the Kashmir problem by marching to Srinagar to hoist the Indian tricolour on June 23—the death anniversary of Jana Sangh founder, Shyama Prasad Mukherji, who died in Kashmir during a protest meeting against Article 370 (which gives special status to the Muslim-dominated part of Kashmir).

It is hoped that Hindus who disliked the character of the Ayodhya agitation will flock to join the Kashmir campaign since action against the Muslim militants will be seen not as communalism but as nationalism.

In tandem with this, the party will tone down its rhetoric on the Babri Masjid dispute. It's a tactical retreat. Traditional BJP supporters, mainly traders in urban areas, were growing uneasy at the loss of trade and business in Uttar Pradesh during the endless bandhs and riots. Riots in BJP-ruled Rajasthan further embarrassed the party. Finally, leaders in Bihar were perturbed about a possible backlash from "liberal professionals" in the state who are petrified about what an unholy alliance of religion and politics might provoke in volatile Bihar.

The south—where Ram does not provoke the same kind of veneration as it does in the north—is the party's soft underbelly. But even here it hasn't entirely given up hope. The BJP General Secretary in charge of south India, O. Rajagopal, claims that the party is making inroads in Kerala where Hindus are increasingly put off by what are perceived to be the overtly pro-Muslim policies of the Left Front.

In the next few months the party's senior leaders will be gearing up for elections. Mass rallies will be held in north India, parts of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The Mulayam Singh Yadav Government in Uttar Pradesh will be targeted and in Punjab, Bhagat Singh Week will be observed from March 23 to 30 as a demonstration against secessionism.

If the strategy of broadening its electoral base works, the BJP stands to make substantial gains. But having based its entire raison d'etre on one issue for so long, it may not be so to diversify. And then it also runs the risk of letting down people whose emotions have been raised to fever pitch by Ayodhya. —SHAHNAZ ANKLESARIA AIYAR in Jaipur

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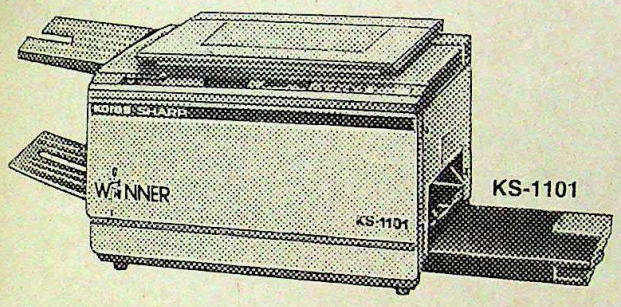

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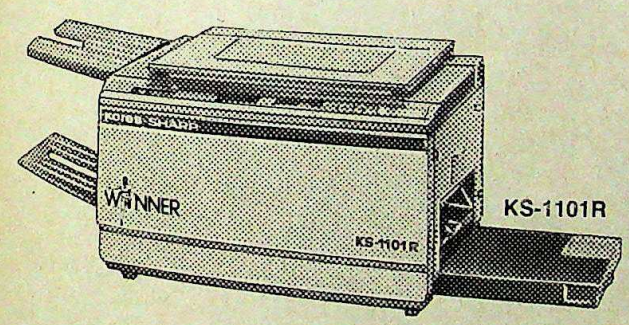

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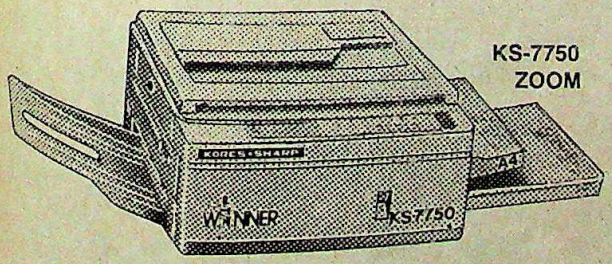

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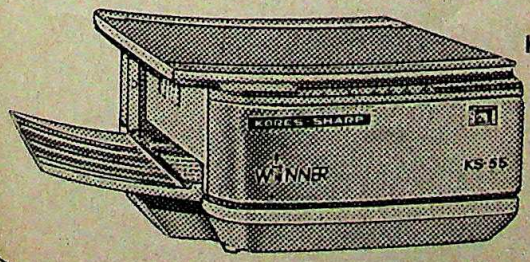

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TELEPHONE TAPPING

SCANDALOUS REVELATIONS

The still-secret report by the CBI on telephone tapping, ordered by V.P. Singh after Chandra Shekhar alleged that his phone was bugged, contains shocking details of tapping ordered by Congress(I) governments.

By PRABHU CHAWLA

LAST year, when Chandra Shekhar, who was then the Janata Dal gadfly, made the dramatic charge that the government was illegally tapping the telephones of 27 politicians, including his own, little did he realise that he had fired off a Scud missile that would land, unfortunately, on his own political turf with highly devastating consequences.

For the still top-secret report of the CBI inquiry that followed Chandra Shekhar's accusation is nothing short of a political bombshell, equal as it is in impact to the explosive 1981 revelations about mail tampering and censorship that so very severely damaged the credibility of the then Indira Gandhi government and caused one of the biggest furores in the history of the Indian Parliament.

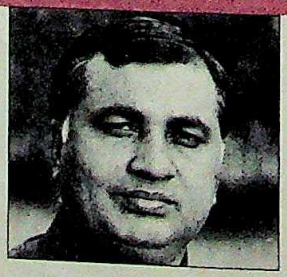
The fall-out from the latest CBI report is expected to be no less. It will embarrass not only Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar but also his allies, particularly the Congress(I). For the major revelation is that while Chandra Shekhar's allegation about his phone being bugged by the V.P. Singh government was utterly baseless, there was, indeed, widespread covert—and even illegal—snooping being conducted however during the period when the Congress(I) government was in power at the Centre.

The governments headed by the Congress(I) and allies like the AIADMK mostly from 1984 to 1987 had ordered the Intelligence Bureau (IB) to bug not only the

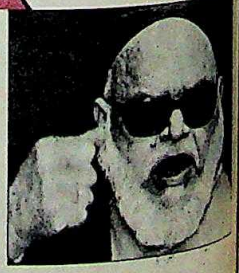
The Rajiv Gandhi government snooped even on cabinet ministers who did not pose any political threat.

The phone of K.C. Pant who was minister of steel and mines was bugged even though he did not then pose any threat to the government.

Congress(I)'s trade union leader R. Kumaramangalam feels that his phone was tapped as a political opponent at the Centre wanted to embarrass him.



Arif Mohammed Khan's phone was bugged on the pretext that he was receiving threatening calls even though he was unaware of any such calls.



The phones of the Imam of Jama Masjid Syed Abdullah Bukhari and his son Ahmed were bugged in an attempt to keep track of the communal situation.

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phones of their political opponents but also those of Central cabinet ministers, Congress MPs, MLAs, state ministers, trade union and religious leaders. Among the hundreds of people who were under surveillance were Arif Mohammed Khan (then still with the Congress(I) as a minister), K.C. Pant (who was then minister of steel and mines, former chief ministers like Karunanidhi, Chimanbhai Patel, A.R. Antulay, Jayalalitha (whose phone was tapped even for six months during President's Rule in Tamil Nadu in 1988), Syed Maulana Abdullah Bukhari and his son Ahmed Bukhari and over a dozen cabinet ministers in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

The secret report is the first shocking documentary evidence that the Congress(I) government at the Centre was systematically snooping even on its own chief ministers and Central cabinet ministers. Ramakrishna Hegde who had to quit as Karnataka chief minister in 1988 following accusations that he had ordered telephone taps on his political colleagues, remarked when informed of the CBI findings: "Let the Government make the report of the CBI public. Those who were teaching us ethics should set some examples."

The CBI's report came after a four-month probe undertaken by the agency after Chandra Shekhar shocking stated in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* during an interview in April 1990 that his phone was being tapped. The Congress(I) pounced on this shocking revelation and made a scathing attack on the then prime minister V.P. Singh and demanded his resignation. Not only did Singh refute the allegation, but he also ordered the registration of an FIR on Chandra Shekhar's unwritten allegation and directed the CBI to investigate.

THE CBI officials along with the experts inspected the three telephones at the residence of Chandra Shekhar. The report says that the experts "came to the conclusion that the three telephones of Shri Chandra Shekhar were not being tapped". Even the DGP of Haryana said that at no stage was Chandra Shekhar's phone at his Bhondsi farm under observation.

The findings are likely to generate a political storm once they are made public because they raise serious doubts over the style of functioning of the various agencies involved in the job. The important lapses are:

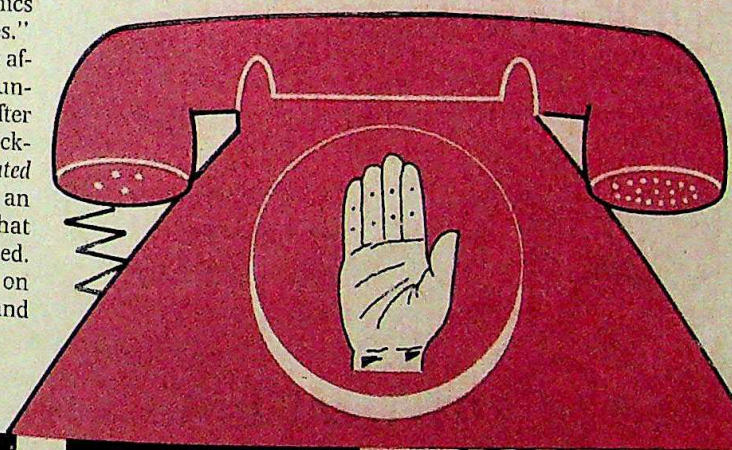
- Politicians were subjected to tapping without any proper authorisation.
- Parallel lines were extended to the police headquarters without any written orders from the competent authority.
- Imaginary reasons were given for ordering the tapping of phones.

The most common reason for telephone tapping in New Delhi was that the subscriber complained that he was receiving threatening calls. The phones of Arif Mohammed Khan and K.C. Pant and that of Rangarajan Kumaramangalam a prominent Congress(I) Lok Sabha member from Tamil Nadu were tapped citing threatening calls as the reason.

What is disturbing and alarming about the scandal is that the phones of senior cabinet ministers were tapped on the orders of police officials. According to senior intelligence officers such orders are issued only under instructions from the top. But even while instructing the telephone officials, the police officers were violating the provisions of the Indian Postal Act which says that a phone can be tapped only if the person is a threat to national security or is involved in smuggling.

S. Ramakrishnan, the then additional police commissioner of Delhi wrote to the local telephone authorities that Pant, Khan and Kumaramangalam were receiving threatening

The AIADMK and the Congress(I) governments in some states tapped phones of opposition parties and politicians.



The Bombay telephone of former chief minister A.R. Antulay was bugged for a record period of four years even when he was not in the Congress(I).

The tapping of the phone of Chimanbhai Patel in Gujarat was an indication of the fact that the Congress(I) governments in the states too spied on prominent leaders.

Surprisingly, it was the MGR government which ordered the phone of Jayalalitha at Poes Garden to be tapped and it was continued during President's Rule.

Another victim of the AIADMK government's snooping was the DMK leader and former chief minister Karunanidhi and his son M.K. Stalin.

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THE ROLL-CALL OF VICTIMS

Name and Phone Number	Period of Interception
A.R. Antulay	
☎ 292050	31-3-84 to 30-9-88
☎ 296163	20-12-82 to 31-7-88
☎ 319330	5-8-82 to 31-7-88
Ramarao Adik	
☎ 892211	31-3-86 to 30-4-90
Manohar G. Joshi	
☎ 456030	5-8-82 to 31-12-89
☎ 454986	10-5-89 to 30-4-90
G.M. Banatwala	
☎ 379760	28-2-85 to 31-7-88
CPI(M) Office, Madras	
☎ 848561	10-8-84 to 31-12-85
DMK Office, Madras	
☎ 843965	14-3-85 to 3-7-85
☎ 444754	1-1-88 to 18-5-88
Jayalalitha	
☎ 452121	12-11-84 to 7-11-86
	7-11-87 to 31-12-87
	1-1-88 to 11-2-88
☎ 454479	1-1-88 to 18-5-88
M. Karunanidhi	
☎ 76080	14-3-85 to 6-1-87
☎ 475225	22-2-85 to 31-12-85
	1-1-88 to 18-5-88
K. Ramamurthy	
☎ 843536	14-3-85 to 12-5-86
N. Veeraswamy	
☎ 612279	14-3-85 to 31-12-85
TN Assembly Secretariat	
☎ 561502	12-5-86 to 31-12-86
M.K. Stalin	
☎ 473264	25-7-86 to 28-10-86
	31-12-86 to 14-6-87
P.U. Shanmugan	
☎ 479977	25-8-87 to 31-12-87
	1-1-88 to 18-5-88
☎ 471218	25-8-87 to 31-12-87
	1-1-88 to 18-5-88
Arcot Veraswamy	
☎ 616643	25-7-86 to 7-11-86
Murasoli Maran	
☎ 420140	12-9-86 to 7-11-86
R.M. Veerappan	
☎ 442141	8-11-86 to 31-12-86
	1-1-88 to 18-5-88
Chimanbhai Patel	
☎ 412345	20-4-85 to 17-6-85
BJP Office, Ahmedabad	
☎ 342800	4-12-85 to 20-1-87
K.H. Patil	
☎ 54975	1-4-80 to 30-6-80
D. Devaraj Urs	
☎ 72664	15-1-81 to 30-6-81
	28-2-81 to 30-6-81
☎ 366955	28-2-81 to 30-6-81
S. Bangarappa	
☎ 77375	28-2-81 to 30-6-81
CPI(M) Office, Bangalore	
☎ 24154	15-1-81 to 30-6-81
	4-1-83 to 10-1-83

calls and that their phones should be kept under observation for a brief period. But under the Indian Postal Act, none of the police officials have the power to direct the telephone authorities to tap anyone's phone without the prior knowledge of the subscriber. In all these three cases, none of them had ever made a formal complaint to the police officials nor were they informed that their phone calls were being monitored. Says Rangarajan Kumaramangalam: "May be someone in the Government wanted to embarrass me due to political animosity but he did not succeed. It was a totally illegal affair and was done without my knowledge." Added Arif Mohammed Khan: "I was perceived as a potential threat to the throne, therefore I became important. I never complained to anyone that I was receiving any threatening calls." Worse, the phone lines of both Pant and Khan were extended to the police headquarters. Says Pant: "At no stage was I ever informed that my phone was under observation. The whole affair seems rather bizarre now. It strikes at the very root of collective responsibility of the system."

But the surprising target for tapping seemed to be Pant who was hardly considered a political threat to Rajiv Gandhi. But when the CBI approached Pant for his comments he refrained from giving any specific answer to the officials. Pant's phone was being tapped under direct orders from the Intelligence Bureau.

If the Union ministers in the Congress(I) regime were under surveillance, their counterparts in the states were no

INTELLIGENCE BUREAU

Growing Clout

THE dreaded Intelligence Bureau (IB) has been ruthlessly used for political snooping by successive Central governments. Though it is part of the Home Ministry, it is accountable only to the prime minister and the cabinet secretary. It is the only organisation whose secret account is not audited and it is not expected to keep even the records of its political activities. According to its charter, the IB is expected to feed the Cabinet with information on communalism, trade union and student leaders' activities.

But political intelligence has been its forte. This was emphasised quite effectively last month when the IB Director M.K Narayanan and his deputy spent over an hour with the Tamil Nadu Governor Surjeet Singh Barnala to provide him with evidence of the DMK-LTTE nexus.

The IB's political role increased during 1984-89 when it was given not only extraordinary powers but also financial and technical support by the Government. According to the intelligence sources, many a chief minister and state minister was spied on, on the basis of the reports filed by the IB.

While it is mandatory for all other agencies to keep the records of all the telephone numbers tapped for 5 years, the IB can destroy the records after three months. Moreover, it submits its list only to the cabinet secretary who in turn takes the approval of the prime minister.

The IB can even violate the law. According to the CBI report, the officials approach the junior

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VIJENDER DAGI

The CBI report was ordered by V.P. Singh after Chandra Shekhar claimed that his phone was being tapped.

But the report which reveals tappings by governments of Congress(I) and its allies opens a Pandora's Box.

ared either. And ironically, the Bombay telephone of A.R. Antulay—under whose chief ministership telephones of many politicians were tapped remained bugged for a record four years from March 1984 to September 1988. And interestingly, most of this time he was out of the Congress(I) party.

The report has also revealed that the phone number 892211 of Ramarao Adik currently the most powerful dissident leader in Maharashtra was tapped from March 1986 till April 1990. The Bombay telephone of G.M. Banatwala, a Muslim League member of the Lok Sabha, was also tapped from May 1989 to April 1990 under orders of the Maharashtra government.

In Karnataka, where Ramakrishna Hegde had to resign from chief ministership in 1988 following the disclosure that his government had authorised the tapping of phones of certain politicians and other citizens, phones of various Congress(I) leaders and opposition parties were bugged during the last 10 years. The Gundu Rao government did not spare even the office of the legislative assembly secretariat. Among Rao's victims: the then ministers like K.H. Patil, formidable Congress leaders like the current Chief Minister S. Bangarappa and even the former chief minister Devraj Urs.

Between 1981 and 1983, the telephone conversations of over 50 politicians, trade union leaders and phones in the offices of the BJP, CPI(M), the CPI in Delhi were eavesdropped into.

If the Congress(I) was not kind to its own leaders, its allies were no better. In Tamil Nadu, the M.G. Ramachandran government ordered the tapping of the phones of over half a dozen senior cabinet colleagues, K. Karunanidhi and his son M.K. Stalin, Congress(I) leader and TNCC(I) chief K. Ramamurthy, former Union minister Murasoli Maran and appallingly even that of Jayalalitha whose phone continued to be tapped during the President's Rule.

According to government rules, six agencies at the Centre and senior police officials in the state are empowered to order interception of mail and telephone: the director general of revenue intelligence, director of national Narcotics Control Bureau, director general of economic intelligence, state police chief and IB. Barring the IB all of them are permitted to snoop only for a limited period that too after giving the reasons in writing. In Delhi alone 400 telephones were being tapped and over 80 per cent of them were ordered for economic intelligence including that of a number of MPs.

The disturbing fact that emerges is that the big-brother-is-listening-to-you syndrome is after all a reality even in a democracy like India. That the practice could have been on in India for long years is a shameful testimony to the extra-constitutional dimension of the country's octopus-like secret police as also the sense of insecurity that shrouds even the most powerful and charismatic of rulers. Elsewhere, the attempt by one political party to bug the telephones of another party—the Watergate scandal, which still weighs heavily on the American conscience—led to the impeachment of a President. Such snooping cannot be dismissed as just the tampering of telephones for it is tampering with the essence of a democratic system too.

Though part of Home Ministry, the IB reports only to the prime minister and the cabinet secretary.

IB Director Narayanan

phone department official with bers of the phones to be bugged. From 1985 onwards, the telephones of senior politicians both in the ing and the opposition parties were ged under direct orders from the IB. Since the IB officials don't leave y document with the local offices, e organisation has been getting way with serious lapses. And this was revealed in the case of the Chandra Shekhar phone tapping episode as well. When he made the allegation, V.P. Singh asked for the records. But he was told that Narayanan didn't leave any old records.

The CBI in its report has recommended that the Government should not allow the IB to bug the phones directly. And that it should keep the records for six years. In addition the organisation should operate only through the senior most official of the Telephone Department. Similar suggestions were made in the past but none of the political leaders bothered to discipline the organisation. After all it has been quite useful in keeping them in power.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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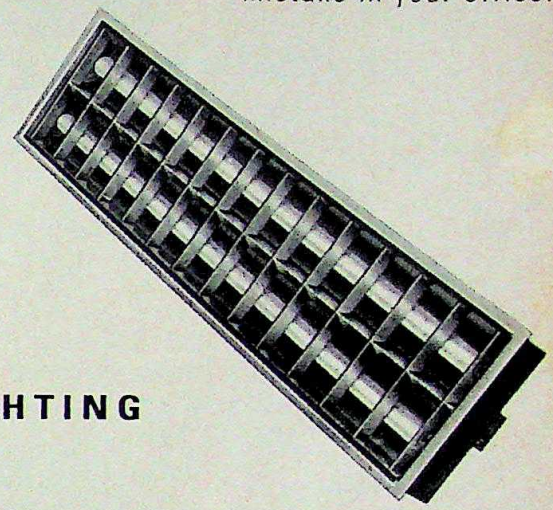

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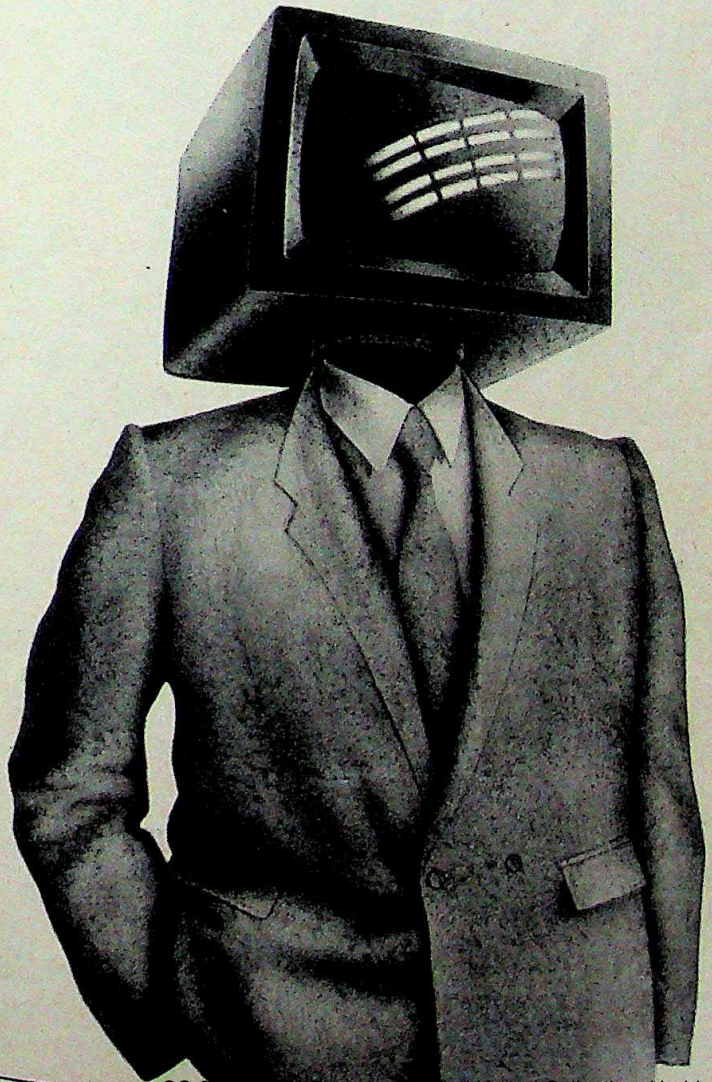

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JUDICIARY

Edgy Ethics

Bar takes a strident position

"If people say I as a judge am not intelligent I don't mind. But if they impute that I am not honest then all is lost."
—Chief Justice Sabyasachi Mukherjee in INDIA TODAY (July 15, 1990)

THE judges of the higher courts are under scrutiny, and from none other than the lawyers themselves. And picking the clue as it were from their Bombay colleagues, who successfully boycotted three high court judges last year, the 2,500-member Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) has in a strongly-worded resolution in early February sought the resignation of Justice V. Ramaswami, and threatened to boycott his court if he did not quit. This aggressive move was spearheaded by former law minister Shanti Bhushan. In fact, he seconded the resolution to boycott Ramaswami. It followed from the shocking revelation in the report of the Accountant General (AG)—Audit, Haryana and Chandigarh, that the judge was responsible for administrative and financial misdemeanour.

If Ramaswami bows to the pressure from the Bar and departs, the crisis could pass. If he decides to fight it out, the result could be a bitter confrontation between the Bar and the judiciary. On the other hand, he also faces the prospect of impeachment.

The SCBA's strident action was in response to Chief Justice Ranganath Mishra recalling Ramaswami to work after nearly five months of forced leave. In July 1990 late Sabyasachi Mukherji had asked Ramaswami to desist from discharging judicial functions. This followed the setting up of a three-judge committee, comprising B.C. Ray, K. Jagannatha Shetty and M.N. Venkatachaliah, to inquire into the alleged acts of misdemeanour of Ramaswami as chief justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court at Chandigarh, as pointed out by the interim audit report.

Even while setting up the judges' committee Mukherji seemed to be conscious of the uncertain ground he was standing on, because short of the extreme step of impeachment there seemed to be no other means of dealing with a judge facing allegations of misdemeanour. He confessed that "legally and constitutionally, the chief justice as such has no moral right or authority to inquire into the conduct of a sitting judge of the Supreme Court".

The Supreme Court in order to allow Ramaswami to resume work appears to have overlooked the final inspection report of the AG. Some paras of this may form a part of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report that will be presented to Parliament.

The 16-page report of AG(Audit), which is an extremely cautious document, has laid the following charges against Ramaswami:

► Bill for the residential telephone at Madras for the period October 1987 November 1989 was Rs 76,150.

► Overstay of vacation of LTC without leave on five occasions.

► Use of staff cars at Madras—journey shown as official.

► Purchase of 25 maces worth Rs 3.60 lakh from M/s P. Orr and Sons, Madras.

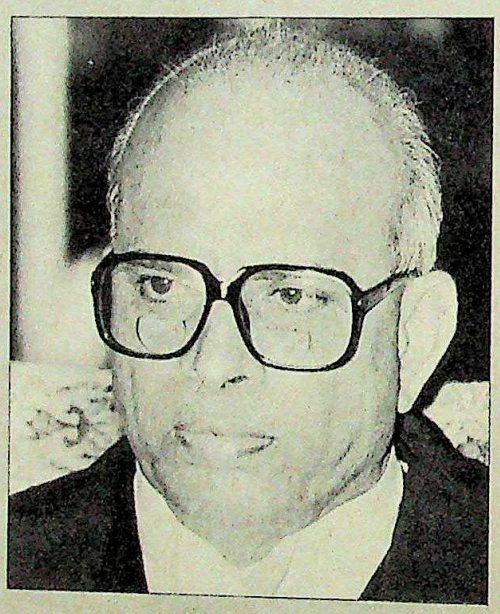
► Furnishing of residence at Chandigarh. Items worth Rs 13.67 lakh purchased during Ramaswami's tenure by splitting purchases.

Interestingly, the judges did not look into all the alleged irregularities. They explained that the "CJ (Mukherji) was of the view that these matters might not be susceptible to an assessment that might involve questions of moral or legal impropriety".

SCBA members, however, are not convinced. They assert that the report is equivocal and was intended to protect the interest of judges. Says a senior advocate: "If such committees declare a judge guilty or clear him, it would set an unhealthy precedent to investigate other judges in future."

In fact, the furore concerning judges' ethics has prompted leading jurists to favour an independent machinery to investigate and punish corrupt judges. Notes constitutional expert Nani Palkhivala: "There is a danger in allowing the Bar to pass judgement on a judge. But what is the option before the Bar? There is no machinery to bring errant judges to book."

The solution appears to be, literally, next door. In the court adjacent to the chief justice's court, a five-member constitutional bench, including all three members of the committee set up by Mukherji, in addition to Justice L.M. Verma and Justice J.S. Sharma are examining this very issue. The bench is hearing a case involving corruption charges against former Madras High Court chief justice, K. Veeraswami, who is, ironically, the father-in-law of Ramaswami. Their lordships are mulling over the crucial point: who has the right to investigate and punish an allegedly corrupt judge?



Justice Ramaswami; and (below) Bhushan: confrontation

The campaign to boycott Ramaswami was led by former law minister Shanti Bhushan.

— KANWAR SANDHU and W.P.S. SIDHU

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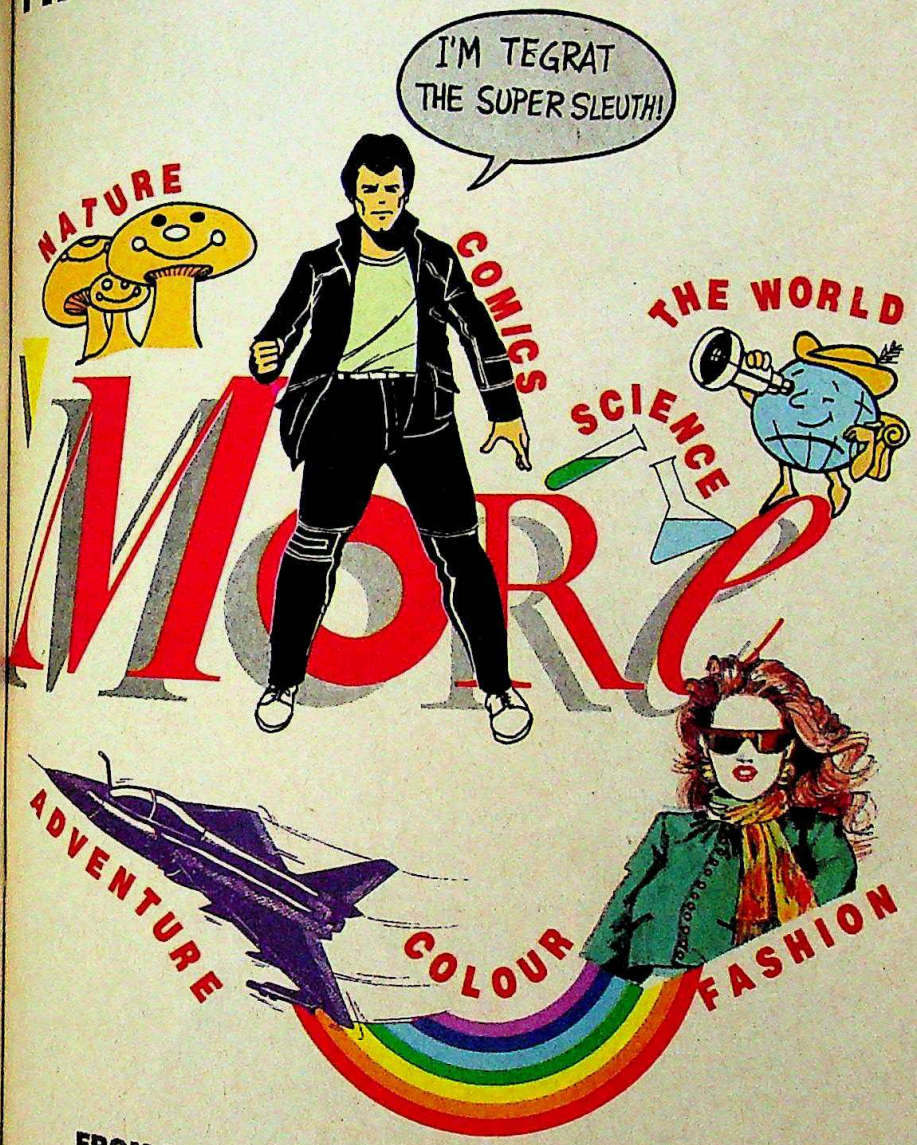

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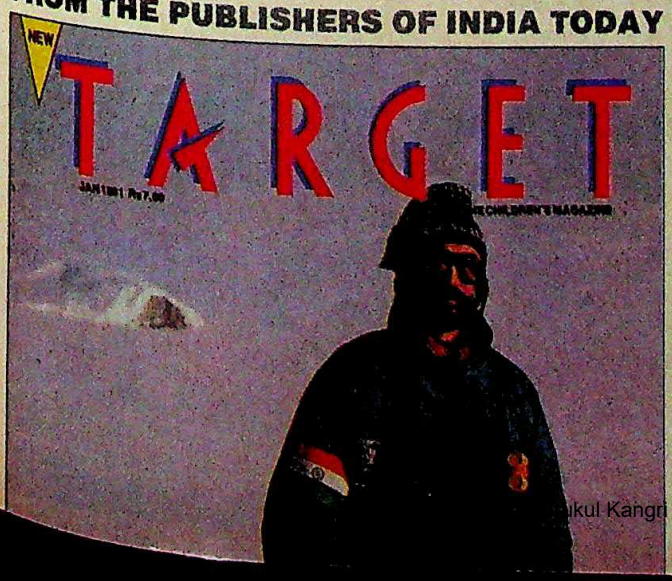

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TAMIL NADU

Election Mode

Parties gear up for polls

IF the Congress(I) and its ally, the AIADMK, were looking for a short cut to power, then Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar seems to have provided them one on a platter. Last fortnight, as the countdown for the assembly elections began, it was clear that the Congress(I)-AIADMK combine was behaving as if it had already taken over the reins of the state.

Not only had Congress(I) and AIADMK activists swarmed the state secretariat with people's petitions, they were also mounting pressure on the governor and other higher-ups to replace key officials with their own sympathisers. Predictably then, when AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha returned from her triumphant three-day tour of New Delhi after M. Karunanidhi's dismissal, she was welcomed by over 1,000 party workers and taken to her house in a huge procession. That the glamorous petrel of Tamil Nadu politics was riding a fresh high was evident from the fact that she went to the extent of demanding the recall of Governor Surjit Singh Barnala as he had opposed the DMK government's dismissal.

Not that Barnala's protestations had counted for much. In fact, the prime minister set a new precedent when after a gap of almost 20 years he dismissed the two-year-old DMK government without even obtaining the token report of adverse conditions from the governor. Nor did President R. Venkataraman cover himself with glory when he overlooked the customary governor's recommendation.

Inevitably, as the warring parties gear up for elections, the issue is less the performance of the DMK government and more the manner and cause for its dismissal. The DMK and its electoral ally, the V.P Singh-led National Front are clear about one part of their platform: to seek a mandate against the right of the Central Government to dismiss an elected government mid-term and on flimsy grounds. The President dismissed the DMK government on the ground that it was unable to deal firmly with the LTTE militants in the state. Surprisingly, Shekhar who believes in an open government did not make the undesirable activities of the DMK government public.

With Barnala disagreeing with President's Rule, the DMK and its supporters charge the prime minister with succumbing to the pressure tactics of the AIADMK and the Congress(I). Says Murasoli Maran, former Union minister and DMK functionary: "We will expose this sinister conspiracy of the Congress(I) which cannot tolerate any government other than its own or that of its allies." The hawks in the DMK have begun talking in terms of waging a casteist war against the Central Government. Charges Nanjil Manoharan: "The DMK government has been dismissed for the second time only because of pressure from the brahminical political and upper caste cult which rules the Centre and the Congress(I)."

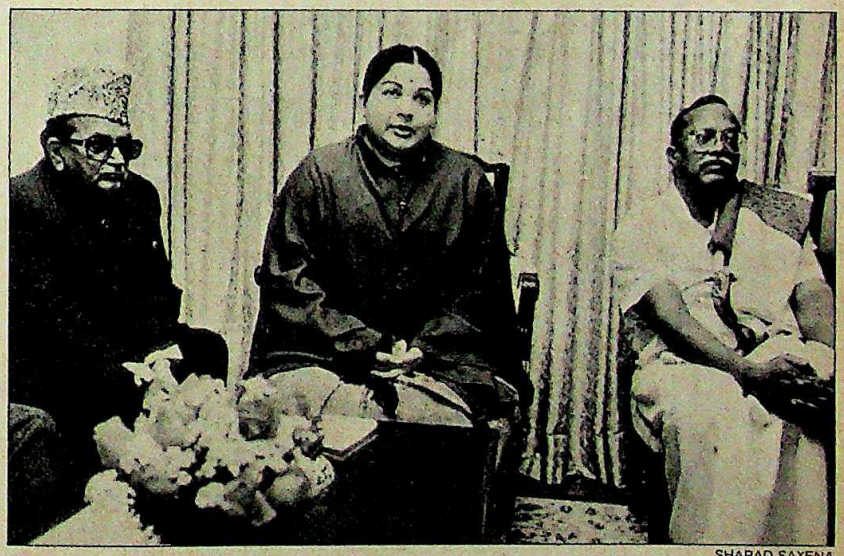
Karunanidhi has launched a campaign along these lines. He has begun his electioneering by accusing the Central bureaucracy and the President of being intolerant of the DMK government which was dominated by the

SHYAM TEKWANI

Karunanidhi with Singh, Rama Rao and Namboodiripad at a rally

The AIADMK's plank will be the 'anti-national' activities of the DMK, which in turn will seek a mandate against the Centre's right to interfere in a state.

Jayalalitha with H.K.L. Bhagat at a press conference



SHARAD SAXENA

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backwards, minorities and Harijans. He is even demanding the resignation of the President. The DMK cadres have also hit the streets. In particular their ire is directed against Commerce Minister Subramanian Swamy, President Venkataraman, IB chief M.K. Narayanan, former Union minister P. Chidambaram and Jayalalitha, because they all belong to the coveted upper castes.

But Karunanidhi's arch foe is no pushover. Though Jayalalitha's main election plank will be the "anti-national activities" of the DMK government, her foremost strength remains her formidable charisma. And she is expecting to romp home with the support of the Congress(I). In fact, in the last general election the Congress(I)-AIADMK combine won 38 of the 39 Lok Sabha seats. A year earlier, pitted against each other in the assembly polls, they had fared badly.

But this time they are going it together. And with Rajiv Gandhi out of power, Jayalalitha has been able to extract 168 assembly seats out of 234 leaving a mere 66 for the Congress(I). The Congress(I) also appears to have surrendered all envisaged spoils, what with AICC(I) General Secretary H.K.L. Bhagat announcing that the AIADMK would form the government on its own. Surprisingly, in this Rajiv did not even consult local leaders like G.K. Moopanar, leader of the opposition in the dissolved assembly. The TNCC(I) chief K. Ramamurthy of course defended this decision, saying: "We have conceded that the AIADMK is the dominant party in the state and Jayalalitha is the only leader who can along with Rajiv Gandhi win the polls for us." And Jayalalitha has been quick off the blocks. She has begun inviting applications for seat nominations. Like the last time she is asking for Rs 2,000 with each application and expects to collect over Rs 2 crore, almost the same amount she had done last time.

But currently the DMK is riding a sympathy wave, as was evident by the success of the bandh and the 25,000-odd people who courted arrest. Emboldened by Singh's successful tour of Kerala where the LDF defeated the Congress(I)-led UDF in the district council elections, it has roped in the former prime minister as its main campaigner. But if the battle boils down to a match between Jayalalitha's glamorous appeal and Karunanidhi's political astuteness, the former chief minister may well find himself on sticky wicket. —PRABHU CHAWLA

MAHARASHTRA

Uneasy Truce

Congress(I) rivals patch up

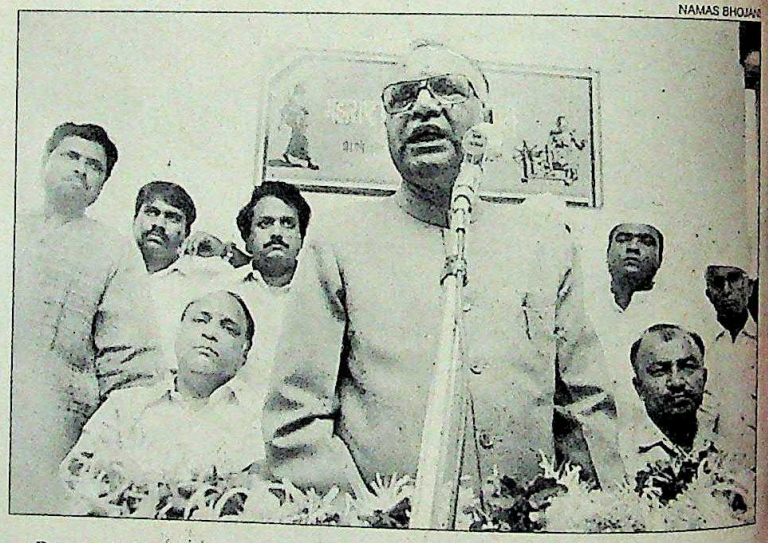
THERE is a legendary rivalry in Maharashtra between Deshmukhs and Patils. Deshmukhs traditionally are landlords and Patils produce village headmen and law enforcers. The relationship between the new MPCC(I) chief and former chief minister Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar and Industries Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh seemed to be cast in the old mould with neither giving a quarter in their feud for gaining hegemony in their home taluka Latur in the Marathwada region. Deshmukh used to take delight in exposing any scandal that his rival could be associated with as chief minister. In his turn, Nilangekar had refused to induct Deshmukh as minister.

Therefore, it was unbelievable when Deshmukh, a prime mover of the failed coup against Chief Minister Sharad Pawar, felicitated the new party chief in Latur and offered him his full support in building the party.

The Nilangekar-Deshmukh patch-up had become expedient. The Maharashtra rebels, used hamhandedly by the Congresss(I) high command to try and unseat Pawar, have realised that in any future confrontation, their own network in the state will be crucial. Deshmukh is regarded as the best challenger to Pawar. He is a young Maratha, possesses administrative acumen, and has a local base. Though Pawar agreed to retain the rebels in his cabinet, he is expected to hit back. Therefore the rebels are reinforcing their fortifications.

Much will depend on how effective Nilangekar is in his new post. After taking over the new post, he flew to Delhi to consult with Rajiv Gandhi, but did not get a hearing. Though he does not hail from the sugar belt, Nilangekar had some following in the sugar lobby which his mentor Vasantdada Patil was a kingpin of. But Pawar has successfully wooed the sugar lobby and that's why he did not object to Nilangekar's induction. But Nilangekar will need all his skills to perform the balancing act between the chief minister and the power-brokers in Delhi. His predecessor, S.K. Shinde, got into trouble because the high command felt he was getting dangerously close to Pawar. So he had to appear to rebel against Pawar.

NAMAS BHOJANE



Pawar, Nilangekar and Shinde: treading on thin ice

Being temperamentally poles apart from Pawar, Nilangekar, treading carefully, may win back the support of the Vasantdada group in case another 'Operation Desert Pawar' is launched. Dissidents murmur that the day of reckoning will come after the wedding in March of Pawar's daughter. Former chief minister S.B. Chavan has reportedly said that the 'loyalist' perception of the need for change still remains unchanged.

This may not be the right time if Nilangekar wants to build the party in Maharashtra, but he is in the right place in case the high command unexpectedly destabilises the Government again. —M. RAHMAN

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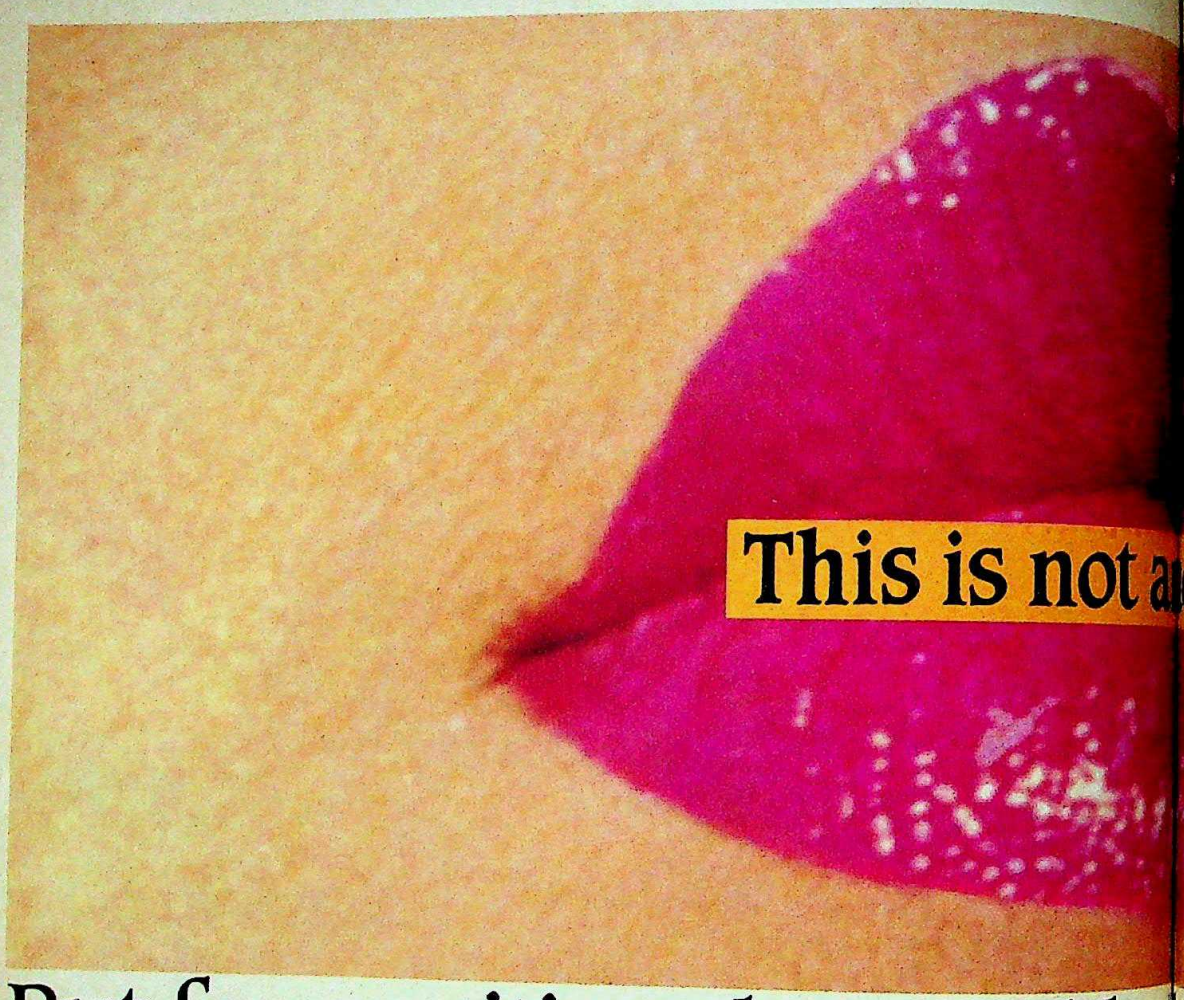

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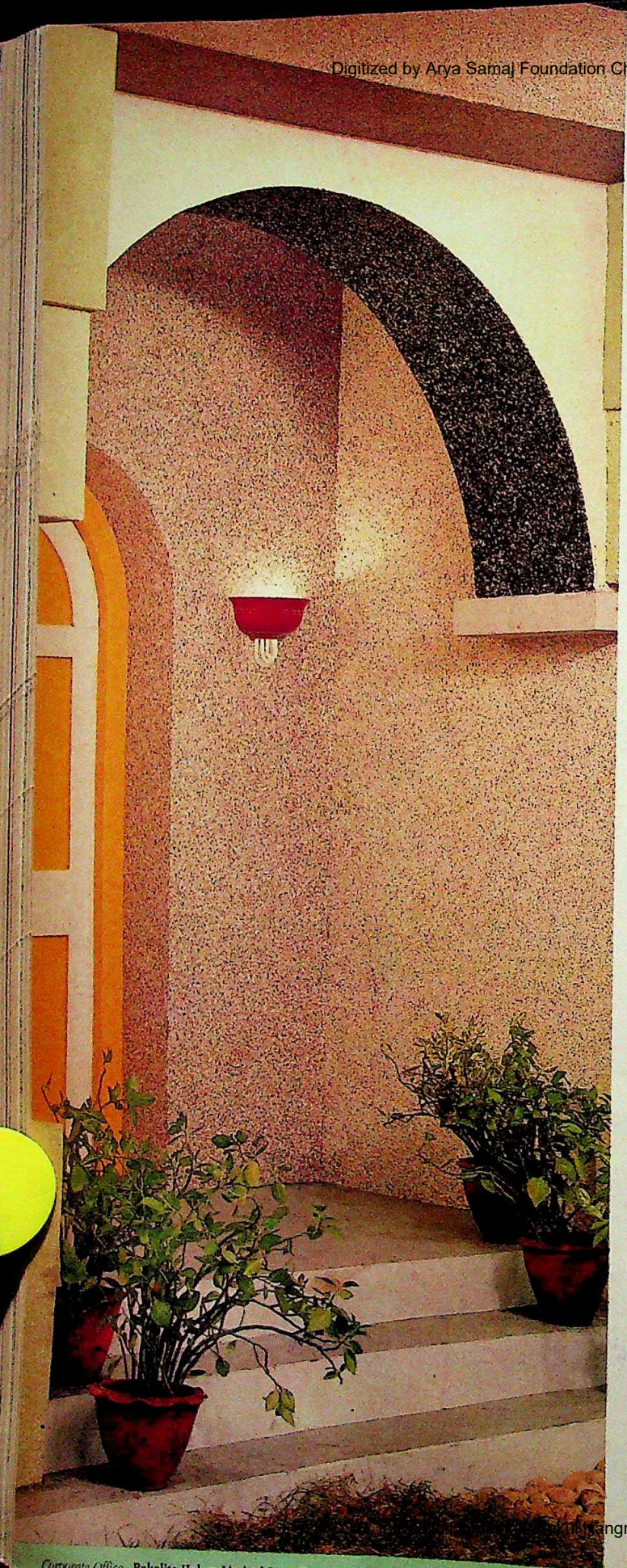

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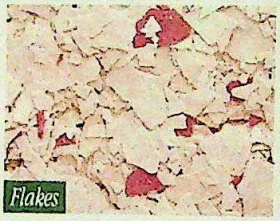

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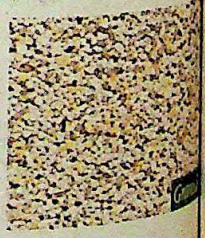

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GOA

Dirty Deals

More defections in store

NO wonder the new Goa Chief Minister Ravi Naik has been an ardent promoter of the traditional game of kho-kho. The business of government in the palm-fringed state has gradually descended to the level of rustic horseplay. In less than a year, Goa has had four chief ministers, besides a short spell of President's Rule which ended last month with the surprise appointment of Naik.

But no sooner was Naik sworn in than he found himself floundering. Governor Khurshid Alam Khan refused to allow him to induct any ministers until he proved his majority. The Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), to which he belonged before he crossed the floor to become chief minister, filed a petition before Speaker Surendra Sirsat. It demanded his disqualification. Naik's problem was that he had failed to take enough of the 19 MGP legislators with him to convert his defection into a split.

Naik: in a mess

Hemmed in politically, Naik compounded his discomfort by ending up in a straitjacket at the Goa Medical College Hospital after a severe attack of cervical spondilitis. "The weight of the garlands he got after becoming chief minister received an old ailment," the Congress(I) legislature party chief, Wilfred De Souza explained.

While Naik's personal ambition may have been realised, political life in Goa is now a steamy morass, with several court cases and assembly disqualification petitions resulting from the totally opportunistic alliances made by MLAs. Even as the legislators were preparing for the forthcoming assembly session, there was talk of a fresh set of defections. This time to dislodge Naik. What no-one seems to give a jot about is whether this interminable game of political kho-kho is getting on the nerves of Goa's voters.

—M. RAHMAN

Case Against Caste

INSIDE EYE BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

Vishwanath Pratap Singh jumped onto centrestage again last fortnight as the self-styled lamp-lighter of social justice by demanding that a staggering 60 per cent of party tickets be reserved for backward castes. He was re-escalating the reservation controversy to another contentious height even as the Supreme Court was hearing arguments on what is surely one of the most important constitutional test cases on the nation's agenda: the legal validity of the decision to implement the Mandal Commission report.

Virtually unnoticed by the press, the eminent jurist Nani Palkhivala has delivered such a trenchant, incisive and comprehensive indictment of the report that even hardcore protagonists have been forced to sit up and pay heed. No other governmental decision, he said, has even remotely approached this case in the range of its constitutional sweep. The comparison between earlier such cases and the Mandal case, he says, is like "the difference between a hillock in Delhi and the Himalayas."

This is because a report claiming constitutional sanctity has declared more than half the nation as backward, entitled to preferential treatment in employment—civil, military, public sector, private industry receiving any form of government assistance, college admissions, and promotions.

He argues that the Mandal report is fatally flawed: it totally ignored the cardinal element in its terms of reference in making its recommendations, that is to say, determining first of all the very desirability of reservations. This would have entailed fathoming whether existing reservations at the state level had led to demoralisation in essential services such as the police and whether there was evidence of the reins of power passing from meritocracy to mediocrity. The argument is not elitist. It is quintessentially a strictly constructionist view of the Constitution which envisages a cohesive, unified and casteless society.

Illustration by PRANAB DUTTA

India, he notes, has progressed from casteism to egalitarianism, from feudalism to freedom. Equality is "the very heart of a free republic". By denying equality Mandal violates the basic structure of the Constitution.

A clause by clause vivisection of the report for the Supreme Court established that states failed to provide the commission with accurate data such as levels of literacy and education among OBCs. Worse, no list of OBCs is maintained by the Government. Caste, in fact, has not been identified in government employment records since 1951. So the report lacks any statistical validity. The shocking upshot was that the commission wound up recommending preferential treatment for all members of backward castes no matter how privileged and excluding crores of forward class members no matter how deserving.

Palkhivala's hallmark is his clarity. The basic contradiction of this report, he pronounces, is that while deploring the indisputable evils of casteism, the commission itself wants caste to be made the sole test of reservations thereby revitalising the institution and making "backwardness" a vested interest. Anti-Mandal protesters showed more emotion than argument whenever they were confronted by self-serving government statistics or denounced as reactionaries by reservationists. Many youngsters burned themselves in speechless rage. Palkhivala now speaks for them with authority and reason. He is the voice of the dead.

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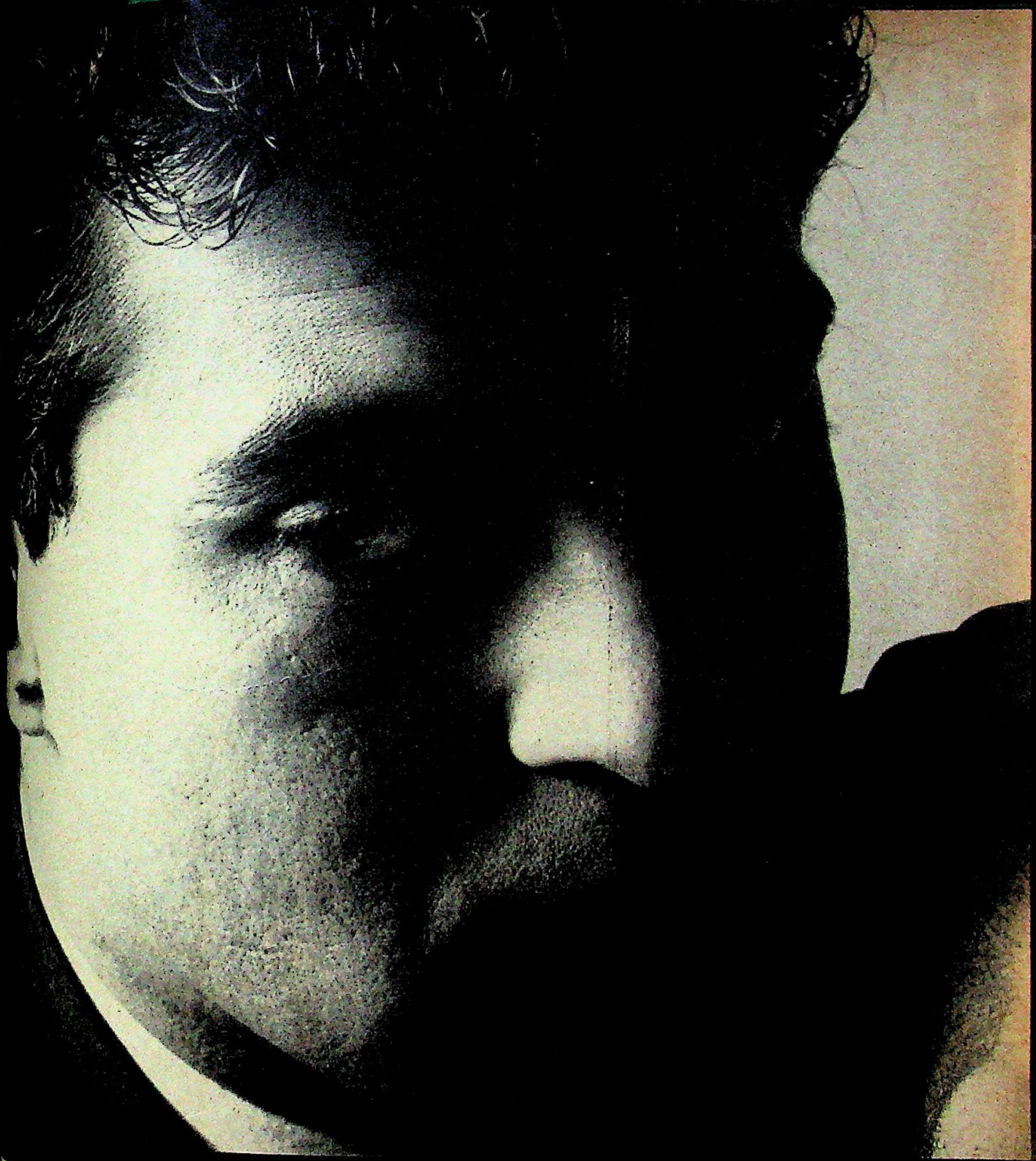

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MADHYA PRADESH

Top Tussle

Kamalnath-Scindia lock horns

SUDDENLY the Congress(I) in the state has bestirred itself from what seemed a long slumber. The reason is not an impending election but the expected revamping of the moribund party organisation which has been almost inactive ever since it was drubbed by the BJP. The two top contenders for the post of MPCC(I) president Kamalnath and Madhavrao Scindia—the two Congress(I) leaders who were elected to Parliament from unreserved constituencies in the state—were showing off their influence to the high command. Another Congress(I) MP, bureaucrat-turned-politician, Ajit Jogi also went on a padyatra of the tribal belt, from Bastar to Bilaspur.

Although the ostensible purpose of the three tours was the same—strengthening the party and renewing contacts with grassroots workers—the real intention was obvious. As the MPCC(I) chief Arjun Singh has not been well and as the Congress(I) leader of the Opposition S.C. Shukla has not been able to infuse new life into the gasping party, efforts are on to induct new leaders at the helm. Both Scindia and Kamalnath aspire for the top party post in the state.

Kamalnath has the disadvantage of being labelled as an Arjun Singh camper, a fact which Scindia is sure to harp on. But the success of Kamalnath's tour has also shown that the old Scindia-Kamalnath rivalry is surfacing. Kamalnath tried to project himself as a leader acceptable to all the party factions and served notice that he could pose a serious challenge to Scindia. At several places he took pains to gather local leaders from warring factions and made them join hands. Claimed Kamalnath: "I am the only leader in the state who is above factional politics."

Kamalnath's successful four-day tour was not only the result of his typically brash style but also the outcome of the help he received from Ashok Vir Vikram Singh alias Bhaiya Raja, the independent MLA who has a criminal track record. During the tour which drew enthusiastic crowds, Kamalnath visited Panna district where his programme was organised by Bhaiya Raja. Said Kamalnath about the crowds: "The Congress organisation was nowhere in sight. But Bhaiya Raja made it into a grand success."

Till recently Bhaiya Raja's name prominently figured in police dossiers. In fact he had contested the last assembly election from Nainital jail, where he was lodged in connection with a sensational murder at the farmhouse of Akbar Ahmed 'Dumpy'.

Kamalnath is apparently not the only Congress (I) leader to lend respectability to the controversial MLA and use him to whip up support. Scindia also seems to have been charmed by the 6 ft 2 inch tall maverick politician. During his last trip to Panna, Scindia's programme too was organised by Bhaiya Raja.

Criminal links apart, the success of the Scindia-Kamalnath tours—no doubt emulating the yatras of Rajiv Gandhi—has in spite of the factionalism, served to show the party is still capable of posing a challenge to the BJP.

—N.K. SINGH

KERALA

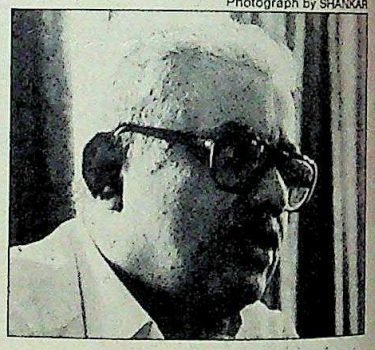
Left Triumph

Upswing in LDF popularity

IT was the stuff political dreams are made of. Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar experienced one of the headiest triumphs of his last four years in power. In district council polls, his CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) captured 12 of the 14 districts designed to transfer power to the grassroots.

Nayanar was ecstatic: "It shows what the people think of the Government." Former chief minister K. Karunakaran and KPCC(I) President A.K. Antony, who had been shouting themselves hoarse about how the election would prove to be a negative

Photograph by SHANKAR



E.K. Nayanar: heady victory

verdict on the Government's performance, looked as though they had been hit by a sledgehammer. The Congress(I)-led United Democratic Front (UDF) won just 141 of the 474 seats compared with the LDF's 328.

The LDF now finds itself in a fairly unique position of power. It rules the roost in Kerala from district to state level. Malappuram was the only district in which the UDF won. The other district was Kasargode where no party achieved a majority.

But just as important is what this portends for the other states, as Kerala has always been a trendsetter. Political pundits throughout the country are now wondering whether the unity of interests among the backward classes, Muslims and leftists that helped bring in the landslide victory can be repeated again elsewhere.

The UDF has only itself to blame for the battering it was given by the voters. It was hopelessly divided. None

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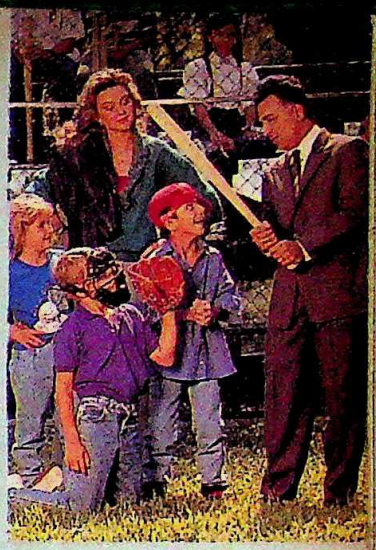

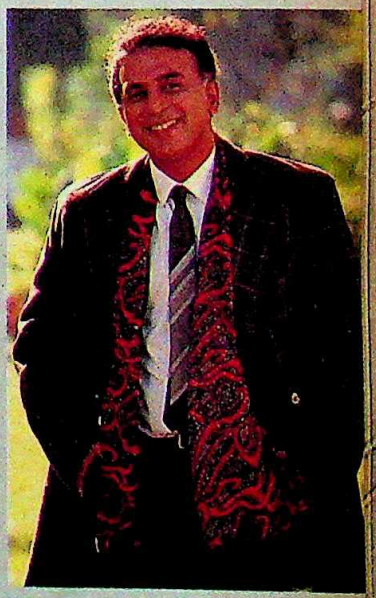

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His name : Soichiro Honda.

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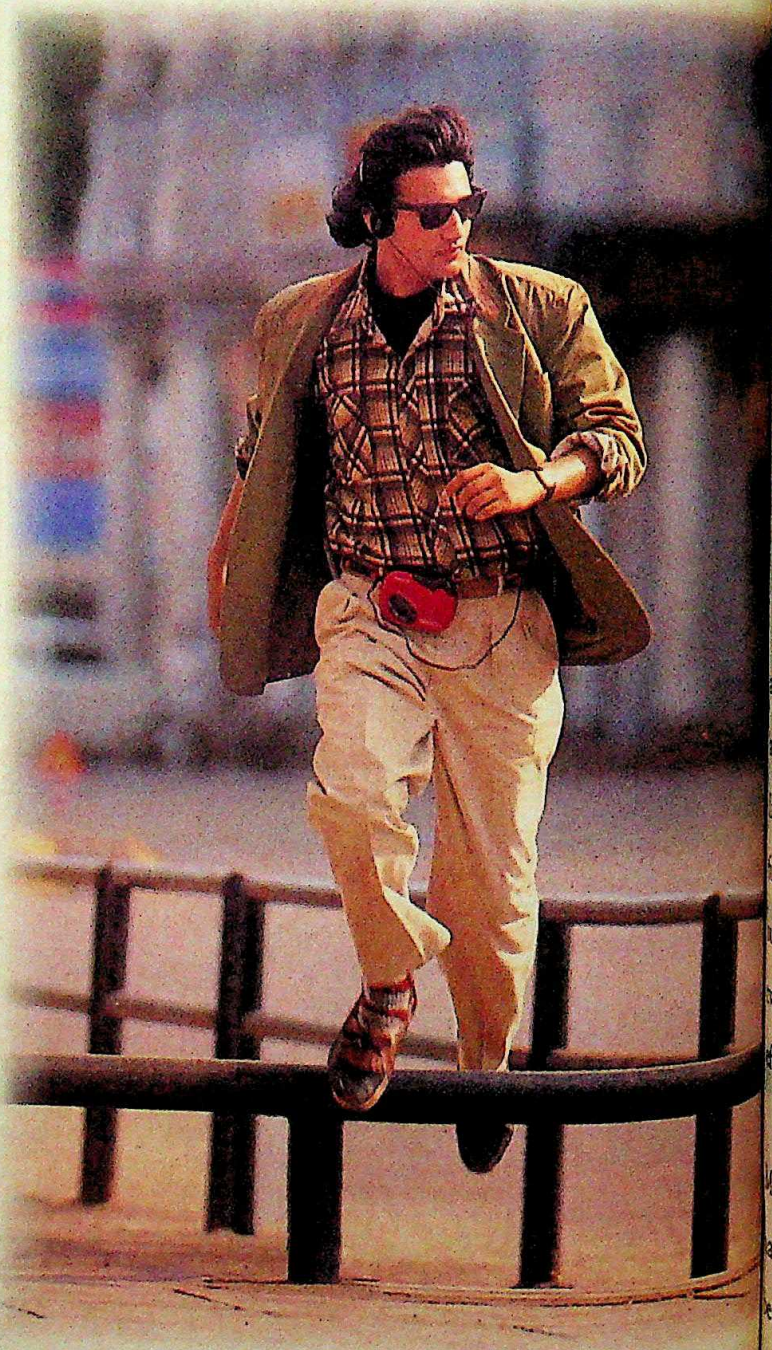

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With the passage of time, his horizon widened. Young Honda enrolled in the Hamamatsu Technical School, not for a degree, but for knowledge. (In between he enjoyed life as a dare-devil racing driver).

The War shattered a lot of dreams for Japan and the young man; but in the aftermath of the desolation, an idea was born.

He scrounged an ex-army two-stroke engine, and fitted it to a bicycle. In an environment of fuel shortage, it proved a success. (The irony of a two-stroke being fuel-efficient!)

But the Honda Motor Company, which had now come into being, sought to make things better, and cleaner, and dependable.

The big idea was born in August 1958. A 50cc, four-stroke ohc single-cylinder motorcycle was launched. Aptly called the Super Cub, this little wonder put Honda Motors on the world map. Many claim that Honda put motorcycling back on America's roads.

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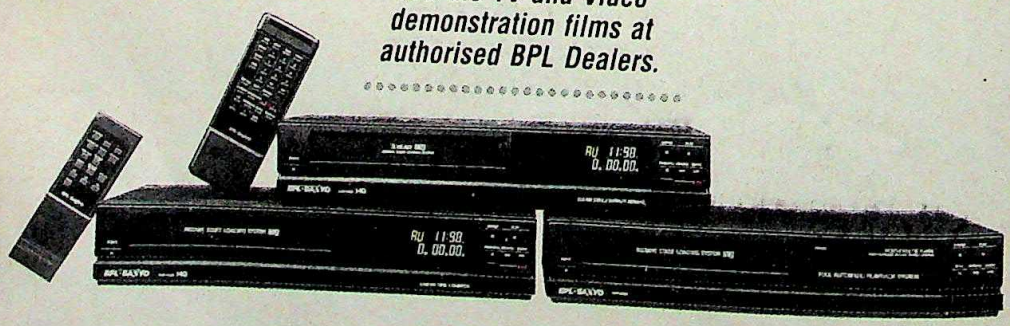

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IN PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

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of the constituent parts—the Indian Union Muslim League and the church-controlled splinter groups of the Kerala Congress—saw eye to eye. The Congress(I) itself functioned from two distinct camps led by Karunakaran and Antony. The predictable result of the rout has been yet another bout of infighting.

The timing was perfect for the LDF victory. The Marxists were able to cash in on the new electoral configurations that flowered after former prime minister V.P. Singh barnstormed Kerala a few weeks ago. A new vote bank had been created. The backward classes dominated districts like Alleppey and Quilon. In Alleppey the LDF won 36 out of the 38 seats and in Quilon 33 out of the 40 seats.

The non-starter in the whole exercise was the BJP. When it came to the crunch, the voter threw out communal politics. The BJP contested 447 seats but won just two. The Muslim voters who normally voted en bloc for the Muslim League in the UDF broke up to vote for the LDF because it wanted an unequivocal stand to be taken on the Babri Masjid issue. As for the backwards, they also massed their ranks behind the LDF.

The LDF will now use its new-found power in the districts to spread its support base and build its cadre. It will be a case of reaching out to every home and entrenching themselves at village level with an eye on the forthcoming assembly elections.

The Congress(I) has one of two options. It can either retreat to lick its wounds or it can reorganise the party and try to look beyond narrow interests. The coming year will be frenetic with political activity as the parties gear up for assembly elections. There is ample time for the Congress(I) to learn the lessons of its defeat. The alternative, of course, is to leave the field clear for the LDF in the foreseeable future.

—RAMESH MENON

UTTAR PRADESH

Of Awards and Inquiries

WHEN Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav bites the hand that feeds him, he does it with the thoroughness of an underfed crocodile. He finally did what the Congress(I)—on whose support he depends—had been pushing him to do ever since the violence in Ayodhya last October. He announced the setting up of a commission of inquiry on January 19. But before the Congress(I) was even halfway to forming a smirk, he announced awards for 92 administrative officials in the state. The recipients? Precisely those individuals who were likely to be scrutinised by the inquiry.

It was breath-taking audacity. Since November 20, the Congress(I) has been stressing that its support was conditional upon the establishment of a commission of inquiry. When Yadav finally relented, he made sure he deprived his opponents of full satisfaction. For the Congress(I) had demanded two separate judicial commissions. One to deal with Ayodhya and the other to look at communal riots in the state generally. Yadav set up only one.

The Congress(I) also insisted that serving high court judges should head the inquiry. Yadav appointed three former judges.

His almost impudent tongue-in-cheek approach extended to the inquiry's terms of reference. Nowhere was there any mention of apportioning responsibility for the outbreak of violence. The inquiry's brief was merely to "assess the adequacy and justification of force used". The state Assembly's opposition leader, N.D. Tiwari, complained: "One of the major purposes of such commissions is to fix responsibility firmly so that the guilty are punished. This has not been done."

But this was paltry stuff compared with the presentation of awards to state officials. The intention was transparent: to shield officials by honouring them.

The list is headed by the Union Home Secretary, Raj Kumar Bhargava (who was chief secretary in the state at the time) and state Home Secretary Aditya Kumar Rastogi. The two men played a key role in coordinating the police operation.

Other names—the Faizabad Commissioner Madhukar Gupta, DIG G.L. Sharma, who is now DIG Meerut, SSP Subhash Joshi and BSF's DIG R.K. Pandit—are all names which featured prominently on the hit list which the VHP issued after the violence surrounding the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

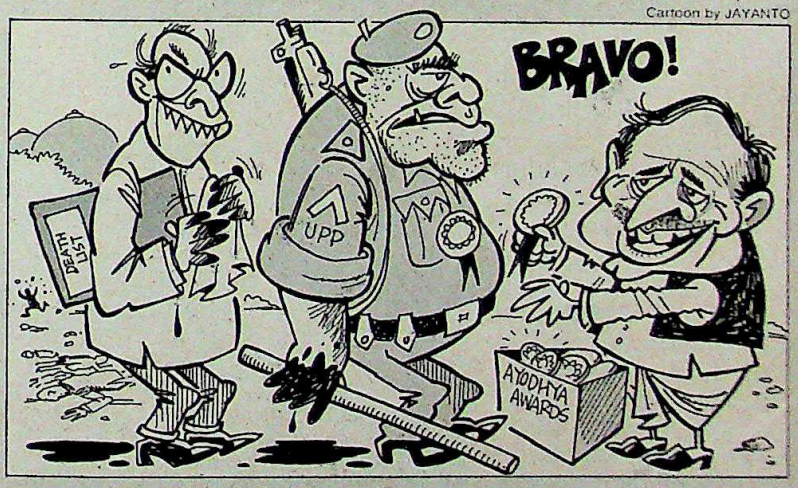
Kanpur DM Kapal Dev, under whose regime the city saw extensive communal rioting in which 32 people perished, has been awarded for his services as former Jhansi DM when he "effectively tackled" the kar sewaks as they tried to enter Uttar Pradesh from the Madhya Pradesh border.

Says Congress leader Arun Kumar Singh in frustration: "If all those against whom the commission will inquire have been awarded, why set up the commission at all?"

This is naivete. When your foremost opponent has made a mockery of your demands in one masterful stroke, even though your support is vital for his survival, it is pointless mouthing plaintive queries. It is time to go back to the drawing-board.

—DILIP AWASTHI

Cartoon by JAYANTO



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PUNJAB

New Upsurge

Police morale at a low ebb

THE scourge of violence that has begun to spread from Punjab's border districts to its interiors escalated last fortnight. In its wake it left the state administration, which was trying to show signs of resilience, battered and bruised once again.

And quite literally at that. The state police chief, D.S. Mangat, was injured in a powerful bomb blast at Ludhiana. Also injured were his three securitymen, his chief security officer, R.S. Sethi, who lost a foot through amputation. Mangat is the second DGP of Punjab to have suffered a direct attack from terrorists. In 1986 J.F. Ribeiro had escaped an attempt made in the fortified complex of the Punjab Armed Police at Jalandhar.

Predictably, the incident had a traumatic effect on the already sagging morale of the police. Especially since it revealed the highly developed organisational skills of the militants. The entire operation was apparently a set-up. The blast was preceded by a bizarre incident. On the midnight of January 31, militants in CRPF guise rounded up 29 persons—all Hindus—from two villages of Ludhiana and Faridkot districts. They later let off nine persons, and left tell-tale signs of having eliminated the remaining 20 at a canal bridge.

The incident stirred the administration into action. Mangat himself camped in Ludhiana to supervise the search operation. Later when he was returning to Chandigarh, a powerful bomb went off when his car neared an overbridge at Ludhiana, ripping through the bullet-proof shield. Soon after, the kidnapped persons were released by the militants. This indicated that the kidnapping drama was enacted to lure Mangat and other VIPs to the spot. The kidnapped persons told newsmen they had been kept at some place close to the blast site as they heard the explosion.

Besides underlining the strike capability of the militants, the incident highlighted the increasing neutralisation of the Punjab Police, through both militant infiltration in its ranks and by threats and attacks. The intensity of attacks on policemen has been on the increase: on some days, as on February 5, as many as 15 securitymen were killed. The attack on Mangat has again sparked off demands for a thorough screening of the force.

The Ludhiana incident, besides giving the lie to the governor's claim that the law and order machinery was being strengthened, also brought into focus the growing ideological differences and rivalries between the various militant organisations. This because just three days earlier 11 Hindus had been killed in Hoshiarpur district. So while one group in Hoshiarpur had killed Hindus another gang in Ludhiana simultaneously freed kidnapped persons unharmed.

The heightened rivalry is believed by some to be an attempt by the militants to gain recognition in the wake of the Government's talks offer. In fact during the past fortnight at least three persons claiming to be close to the militants have met Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and Minister of State for Home, Subodh Kant Sahay at New Delhi, with Sahay offering a "safe passage" to the militants for talks at any place of their choice. Sahay even indicated that the talks, which will be within the framework of the Constitution, could take place in March.

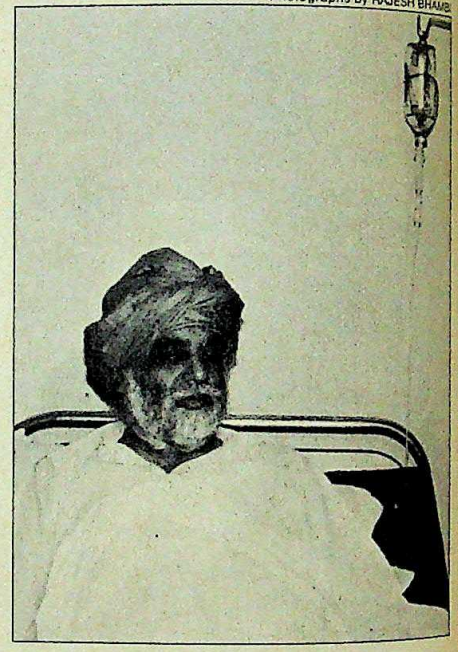
However, so far only the Manjit faction of the AISSF has responded positively and demanded that talks be held at the Akal Takht after declaring Amritsar a "peace zone". Most of the other groups, including the Panthic Committees led by Dr Sohan Singh and Wassan Singh Zafarwal, are reluctant to participate in talks.

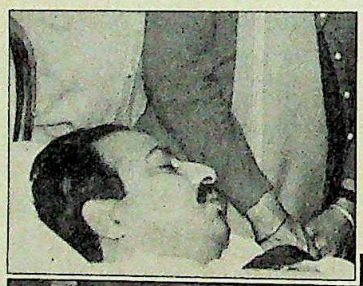
All this augurs status quo for Punjab. Especially since the developments at the Centre have weakened Chandra Shekhar's position, and even the Congress(I) President Rajiv Gandhi has criticised him for negotiating with Simranjit Singh Mann without any preconditions. The BJP and the Left continue to oppose talks.

No wonder then that even Chandra Shekhar declared at Faridkot that the democratic process will be restored in Punjab only when there is peace. This seems a distant hope. In fact, with the deterioration of law and order in Punjab's interior districts, army deployment in Ludhiana, Ropar and Patiala appears inevitable. The votaries of army deployment point to the decline in violence in the border districts after the army fanned out in November. But even that marginal relief may prove deceptive, as the cycle of events in Punjab has shown time and again.

—KANWAR SANDHU

Photographs by RAJESH BHAVE





DGP Mangat (above); security officer Sethi and damaged car

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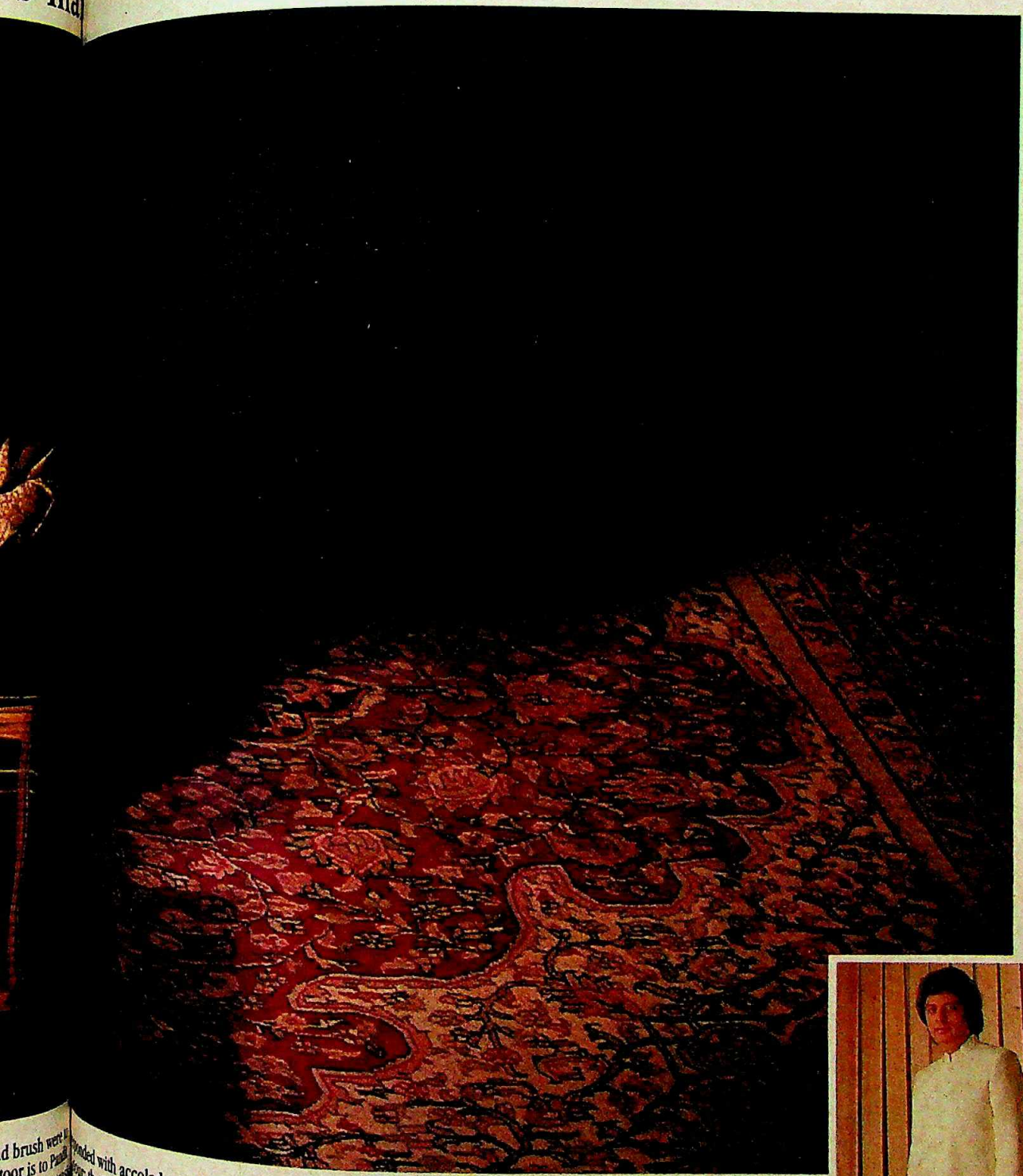

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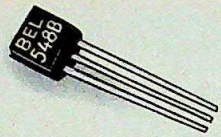

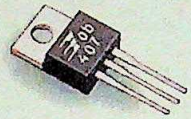

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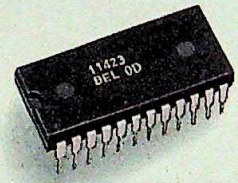

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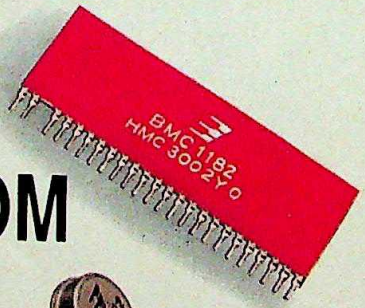

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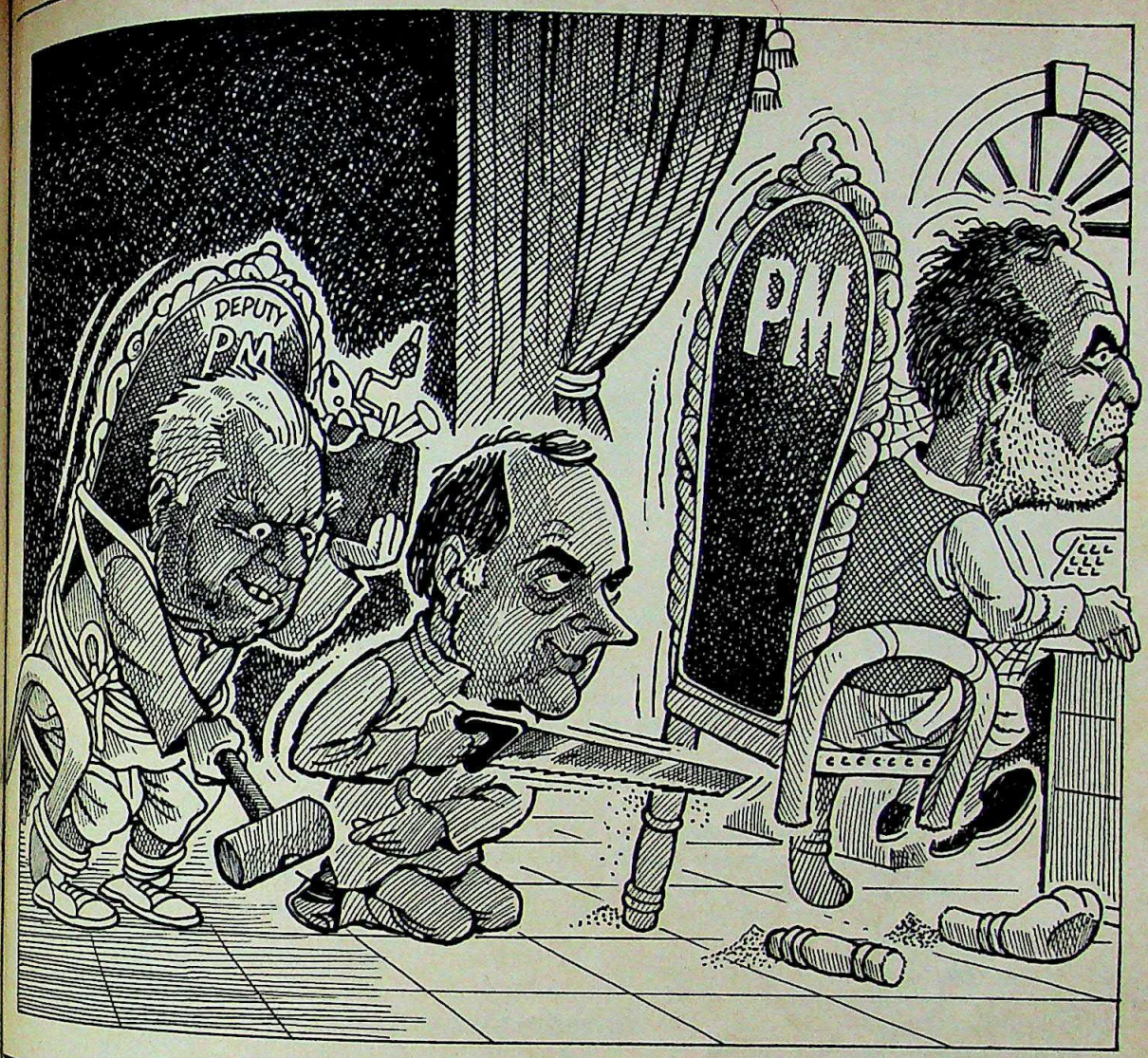

SIGN POSTS

TRANSFERRED: Bhure Lal, joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Office(PMO), who was handling Bofors and other such sensitive cases. Having been brought into the PMO after V.P. Singh became prime minister in 1989, he has now been shifted to the Finance Ministry as financial adviser in the Department of Expenditure.

APPOINTED: Dr Karan Singh, former Union minister, the chairman of the governing board for Auroville in Pondicherry for a four-year term. An international township founded in 1968, Auroville symbolises the values of harmony and dedicated service.

RESIGNED: Javed Habib, from the All-India Babri Masjid Action Committee due to political interference in the Ayodhya talks. He blamed three MPs—Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan and Mohammad Afzal—for his decision. He said the talks had been "an exercise in futility".

OFFERED: By Simranjit Singh Mann, the Akali Dal president, to send "lakhs of Sikhs" to join the US-led forces in the Gulf, in a letter to the US Ambassador to India, William Clark. Interestingly, the offer of support comes close after a request by the SGPC to the Iraqi authorities to protect a gurdwara in their country.

ACHIEVED: By Dibyendu Barua, the Grandmaster title, thus becoming the second Indian to do so after Vishwanathan Anand got the title in 1988. The coveted distinction became his after he defeated the Chinese Grandmaster Ye Rongguang in the final round of the Duncan's Super Grandmasters' Chess Tournament held in Calcutta.

BANNED: Delhi cricket team, from playing in this year's Ranji Trophy, by the Board of Control for Cricket in India for changing umpires in the league match against Punjab without the consent of the rival team. Delhi has appealed against the ban.

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ORISSA

Sweet Revenge

● The recently retired director-general of police, D.N. Singh, is still holding centrestage. Not so much for his policing bravado as for his political somersault.

Much to the embarrassment of his one-time mentor and Chief Minister Biju Patnaik and the ruling Janata Dal party, Singh shifted his loyalty just days before retiring. Deposing before a judicial probe into the violence during the anti-Mandal agi-

Eastern Press Agency

Singh: somersault

tation in the state last year, Singh absolved the Congress(I) of all blame. He firmly maintained that the police had no evidence to prove the complicity of former chief minister J.B. Patnaik or the Congress(I).

Singh perhaps forgot that at the peak of violence he had himself blamed the Congress(I) for all the trouble and told newsmen that the party goons were sparking riots and that J.B. Patnaik had sheltered hoodlums in his Cuttack residence.

The Congress(I), having secured a clean chit from the police chief, is predictably elated. But Janata Dal leaders are red in the face and are attributing Singh's volte face to his revenge bid after the chief minister turned down the request for an extension of his tenure as the DGP. People like Singh it would seem are taking a leaf from the book of our current bunch of politicians.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Appalling Apathy

Snaps India

Telugu Desam cadres protesting Harijan girls' harassment

● The Telugu Desam has a problem keeping itself in the public eye. Finding a good opportunity recently it kicked up a storm over sexual harassment in the Harijan girls' hostel at Narayankhed in Medak district.

The scandal surfaced as Scheduled Caste leader Durgaiah alleged that some Congressmen including the local MLA had forced some of the girls to have sex with them. As a result, a girl had died and 14 others had to undergo abortions in 1986.

Although the district collector found the charges of sexual abuse baseless, four of Telugu Desam's Harijan MLAs went on a hunger strike demanding a judicial inquiry and the transfer of the district officials. Unmoved, the chief minister lamented that the party was exploiting a socially sensitive issue.

KERALA

Powerful Couple

● It is not easy being the most "powerful" couple in the country—you have to maintain two homes. Soon after Padma Ramachandran took over as Kerala's chief secretary, husband V. Ramachandran was appointed as an adviser to the Tamil Nadu governor.

Sources say that New Delhi picked up V. Ramachandran to give the administration a new, clean image. He is well known as a no-nonsense bureaucrat. Even after he retired as chief secretary, the Kerala Government had been using him in various capacities.

V. Ramachandran and Padma Ramachandran

SHANKAR

UTTAR PRADESH

Misfit Mules

● Barely had the dust settled on the *anda-murgi* case—involving rations for the IPKF in Sri Lanka—that the Indian Army is hit by another scandal: *khachchar kand*. Six officers (colonel and lt. colonel ranks) of the Remount Veterinary Service at Bareilly are facing trial by General Court Martial for bungling in the purchase of mules.

Apparently, of the 1,174 mules purchased at a cost of Rs 1.3 crore from an Amritsar-based firm, some are either over age or undersized. Said an officer: "How we bungle in purchases—from the Bofors gun to the mules!"

MAHARASHTRA

Picking Gauntlet

● India's milk sheikh, V. Kurien, is not battle-shy. An opening was provided when Chief Minister Sharad Pawar

PRASHANT PANDE

Kurien: firm stand

accused the Kurien-headed National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) for indulging in hoarding and profiteering in edible oil.

Kurien reacted sharply, demanding an apology from those who misbriefed Pawar. He claimed that the NDDB, with only 5 per cent of the edible oil share, cannot manipulate the market. Besides, the groundnut oil Dhara was selling at Rs 10 less per kilo than other brands.

Kurien's not the one to take things lying down.

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UTTAR PRADESH

Cocking a Snook

● Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav seems to be avoiding Chandra Shekhar like the bubonic plague. His tendency to boycott the prime minister's appearances in the state is becoming embarrassingly obvious.

When Chandra Shekhar visited Ballia on January 13 and halted at Varanasi, Yadav didn't even bother to receive him. What did he consider more important? The inauguration of a minor project in Farrukhabad.

Again, on February 5, Yadav did deign to go to the airport in Allahabad but barely had Chandra Shekhar left the tarmac before he vanished for a public function in Chitrakoot.

The only occasion when

Yadav with Shekhar

the two men have been seen together was during the Janata Dal(S) convention in Ballia earlier this month. But there too Yadav paid scant attention to the Baba of Bhondsi.

Yadav's motives in giving the prime minister the cold shoulder are obvious, given the cooling relations between Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi. By keeping a distance, Yadav can ensure that he backs the right horse—whichever one it eventually turns out to be.

BIHAR

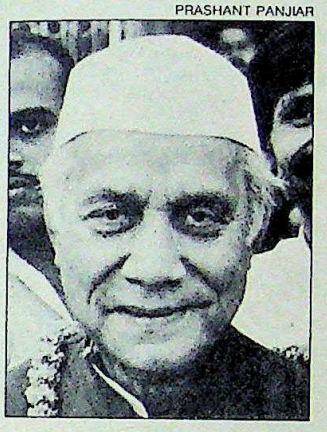
Unequal Battle

● The attempts by the puny Janata Dal(S) to topple the Laloo Prasad Yadav Government are as comical as a mouse trying to crush a mountain. At the recent national convention in Ballia, some partymen from Bihar demanded a repeat of Tamil Nadu. But the Central leadership was unobliging. However, Union Deputy Minister for Health Dasai Chowdhary was asked to win over the "disgruntled" state Janata Dal chief Ram Sunder Das.

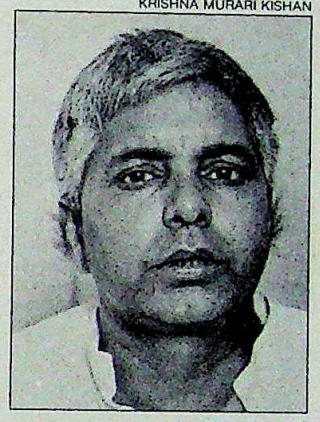
Das enjoys an off-on relation with Yadav but found himself sidelined as his men were ignored recently in favour of the Yadav loyalists for the posts of chairmen of corporations and boards.

Das may accept the bait of chief ministership at the behest of anti-Yadav groups, but Yadav will prove hard to dislodge.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN



Das (left) and Yadav: off-on relationship

MADHYA PRADESH

Gallant Gesture

● The most famous state politician also happens to be the most guarded one. MPCC(I) chief and former Punjab governor Arjun Singh is protected by 120-odd securitymen. Guards are posted at his two homes in Bhopal and one in Delhi.

Considering the monthly cost of Rs 2.5 lakh, the police headquarters had proposed a cut-down in security. But the move was shot down by Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa on "humanitarian grounds" as Singh was recovering after a heart surgery.

Arjun Singh surrounded by a ring of securitymen

R.C. SAHU

PUNJAB

Language Lie

● Language has always been a contentious issue in Punjab. With the ongoing census operations, all attention is on what the Hindus in the state submit as their mother tongue. The militants have been telling the villagers to mention Punjabi.

In 1961, religion dictated the choice as 65 per cent people gave Punjabi and 35 per cent Hindi as their mother tongue when the Sikh-Hindu ratio was 62:38. But by 1981 as many as 85 per cent mentioned Punjabi as their mother tongue.

Hopefully, truth will prevail this time.

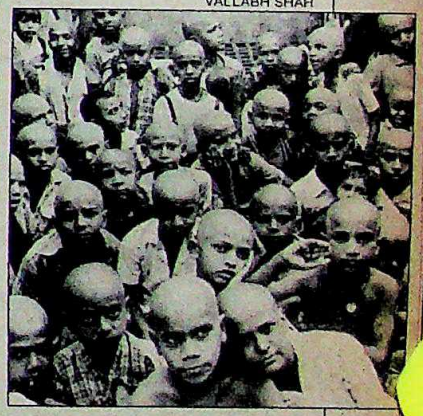
GUJARAT

Defeated Purpose

● It was not the counsel that the Gujarat Government wanted. A report by retired high court judge Aniruddha Dave suggested that the state's prohibition policy should be scrapped. All it had achieved was colossal profits for the police-bootlegger nexus. And hundreds die each year in hooch tragedies.

What Dave advocated instead was state distilleries providing cheap liquor. True to form, Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel rejected such advice. The state would remain dry. If anything, the policy would be more effectively implemented.

VALLABH SHAH



Victims of a hooch tragedy

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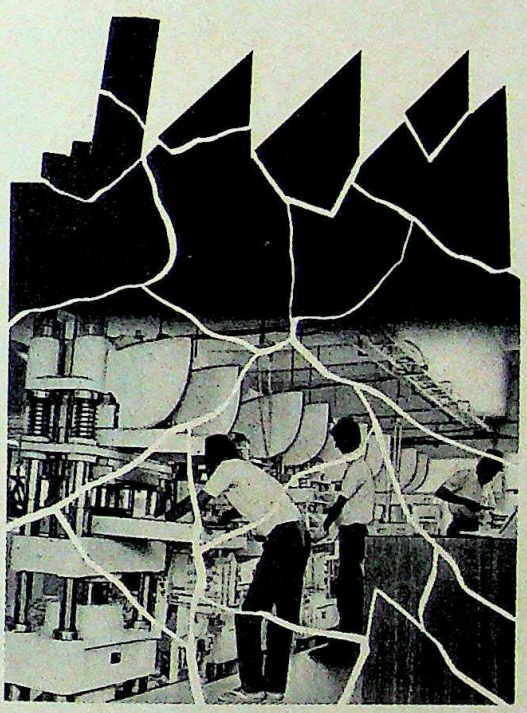

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KUNDA KILLINGS

Damaging Findings

Investigations into the death of Harijans show loopholes in the police version

IT'S an uncomfortable feeling for a chief minister when the spectre of accusations which he used to fling at opponents returns to haunt him. In Mulayam Singh Yadav's case, the spectre is fake encounters. As leader of the opposition in Uttar Pradesh, he used to torment his predecessors, notably V.P. Singh, over this matter. Now it's his turn. Only the implications are grave given his self-styled role as saviour of the backward castes. All the 13 men who died during a police "encounter" with the occupants of a stolen jeep in Kunda tehsil of Pratapgarh district last month were Harijans or Kurmis.

It has provided a golden opportunity for Yadav's opponents. V.P. Singh, who used to be called "Killer Chief Minister" by Yadav, was one of the first to reach Kunda. Now his opponents are praying that the Kunda affair will go down in posterity as the beginning of the end for the wily Yadav.

The police version of what happened in the obscure Chaura village and Bedhan Gopalpur in Kunda is simplistic and full of coincidences. A report was lodged at Kunda police station on January 14 at 8.30 p.m. that a jeep owned by a local brick kiln owner, was stolen near Bhadri village around 7 p.m. The SHO Narendra Pal Singh and SSI Rajendra Pandey, happened to find themselves travelling in a police jeep behind the jeep which had just been picked up by the so-called "dacoits."

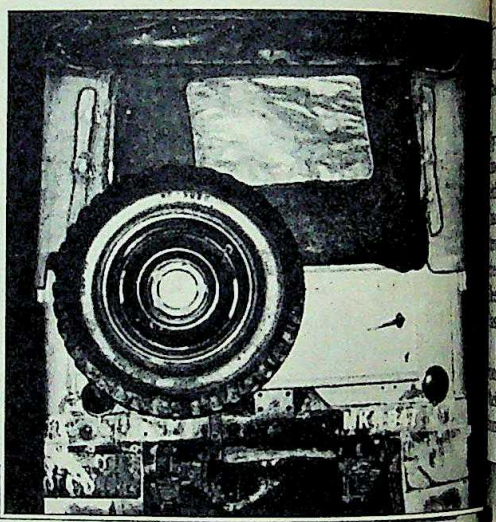
At 10 p.m, when a police checking post at Chaura village told the driver of the stolen jeep to stop, the occupants fired. The police jeep which "happened" to be behind, then fired on the stolen jeep. At the end of a one-hour exchange, the 13 occupants of the stolen jeep were dead.

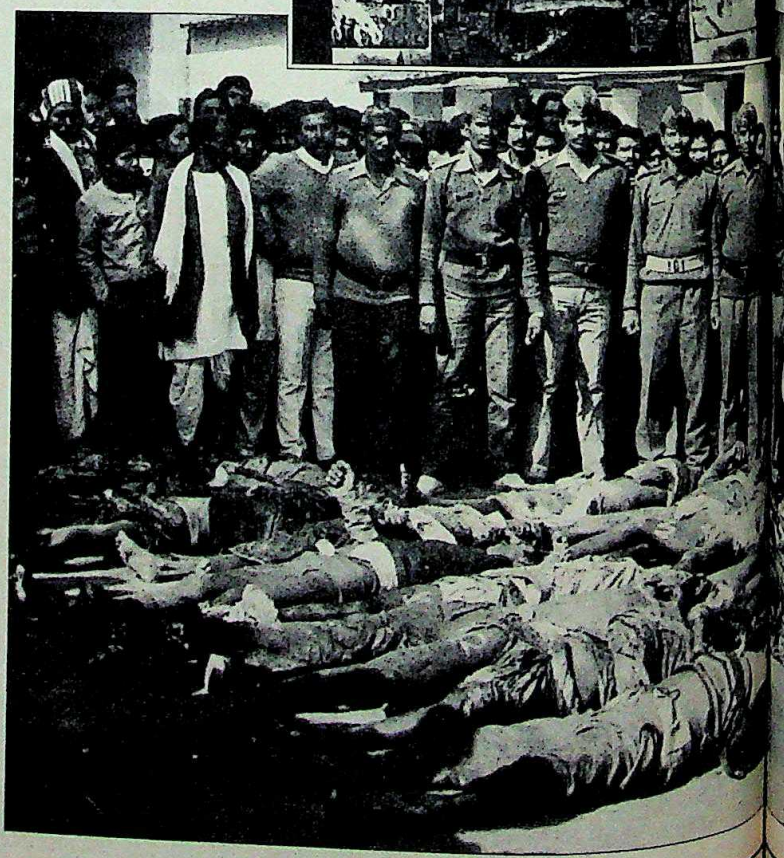
It did not take long for the CID to unearth oddities in the police account (Yadav was forced to set up a CID inquiry when the story first broke in the newspapers and was raised in the Vidhan Sabha). First, it all happened too quickly—the stealing of the vehicle, the pursuit and the resulting encounter. Second, the jeep showed no major damage. The front glass shield and the rear canvas cover were intact. There was only the odd impression of a bullet mark. Says a CID investigator: "It does not look like a jeep in which 13 persons were trapped and killed. It should have been riddled with bullet marks."

Third, the injuries sustained by two policemen involved in the chase were only superficial. This is highly improbable, the investigators believe. Also that, in spite of the shield of the jeep's metal body, the police firing was so accurate that all the occupants of the jeep were killed without even emerging outside.

Although the CID investigators are holding back from giving a categorical verdict until they have the results of medical, ballistic and finger print re-

The CID points out that the police story has far too many coincidences.





The stolen jeep (right); and victims of police firing

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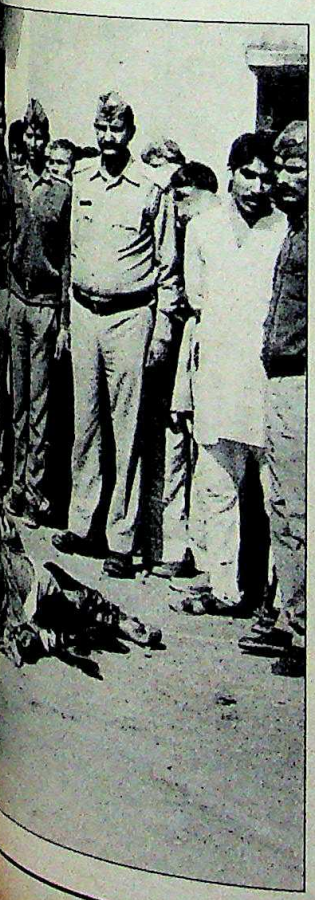
The removal of the officials has not helped, and politicians are asking for Yadav's resignation.

Singh (second from right) at Kunda

...rs, they appear to be convinced that ...e encounter was faked.

Only four of the dead men—Pyare, ...ra Lal, Devta Deen and Rameshwar—...d criminal records. The other nine ...ther had no criminal background or ...d only one or two petty cases regis...ed against them. This fact lends some ...dence to what the family of Devta ...en, an active CPI worker in the area, ...s to tell.

Devta Deen's wife Sumera told INDIA ...AY that some guests had come to ...ir house in Bedhan Gopalpur, 20 km ...m Kunda tehsil, on January 14 to finalise the wedding of Devta Deen's niece. To celebrate the occasion, Devta Deen had called nine close relatives to his home. The other guests, after lunch, left. Later in the evening, while Devta Deen and his relatives sat outside his house chatting, three policemen turned up. They told Devta Deen that a man wanted in connection with the murder of his elder brother in 1988 had been arrested and Devta Deen should go immediately and identify him. Devta Deen was about to leave when his relatives said they would accompany him. Says Seema, his daughter-in-law: "They all went with him because my father-in-law had some local enemies who might have attacked him if they had come across him on his own."



Three other persons—later identified as Rameshwar, Ram Naresh and Hira Lal (all Kurmis) were already sitting in the jeep when Devta Deen and his nine relatives got in. Sumera adds: "And the next thing we heard was that all of them had been killed by the police in an encounter."

On January 16, some local CPI leaders took Sumera and Seema to the district magistrate who, after listening to their story, ordered a magisterial inquiry. This is still in progress.

Investigations by this correspondent in and around Chaura village, the actual site of the encounter, reveal a major discrepancy in the timing given by the police and the villagers. The police say the firing took place at around 10 p.m. The villagers who witnessed it actually saw very little beyond a flurry of gunfire because they all ran for shelter, but most of them agree that the firing erupted at around 8 or 8.30 p.m. Nor could they verify whether there was a genuine exchange of gunfire or whether it was a sham, one-sided affair.

There are pellet marks in the brick structures and thatched roofs of the shops near the spot which, the police say, prove that the 12-bore guns—the type which is claimed to have been recovered from the stolen jeep—had also been fired. But members of the CID investigation team believe it could easily have been stage managed by the police. The true facts will only emerge after the ballistic reports come in.

Yadav knew he had no option but to appoint a CID inquiry. But he went one step further on January 29 and ordered the suspension of 13 policemen involved in the incident.

However, the suspensions failed to stem the outcry. Political leaders continued to clamour for his resignation. Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh demanded the creation of a special court to deal with the case. Together with the Left Front, which has been demonstrating in Kunda almost every day, the Janata Dal is threatening to launch a state-wide agitation.

The Kunda affair looks as though it will cause Yadav many a sleepless night. The stark political facts are that the 13 dead men were Harijans and backwards. It's these very groups which the Janata Dal, not to mention the Left Front and the BSP, have been wooing ardently. As for the Congress(I), it always has an eye on the main chance, particularly where it concerns winning back Harijan support.

If the Kunda affair turns out conclusively to be a fake encounter by the police, it will also be one of the most gruesome of its kind in Uttar Pradesh. If Yadav hoped he could nip the crisis in the bud by suspending the police team involved in the case, he was mistaken. For such action can also be read as an implicit admission that the allegations are true.

—DILIP AWASTHI in Kunda

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ADOPTION

A New Acceptability

Till yesterday it was an anathema, something to be concealed. But now adoption has gained respectability and more and more childless couples are opting for it.

By RAMESH MENON

JUST a few years ago it was quite common for a childless couple to do the disappearing act for a year. Then surface cradling a swaddled bundle in their arms. The proud mama and papa then proceeded to announce they had had a child at last. No longer do couples resort to such tricks. Now they are more upfront about admitting that they have adopted a child.

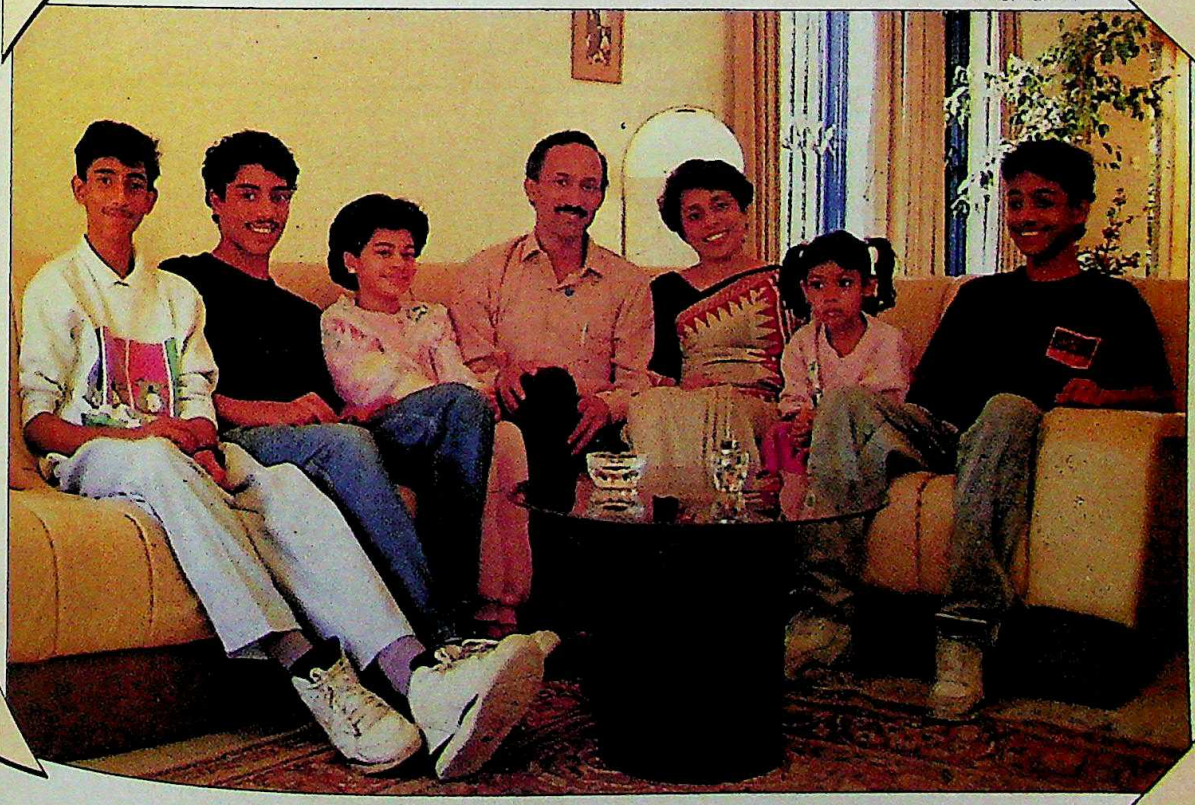
As more and more couples are going in for adoption, the practice is gaining a respectability it never enjoyed before. There has been a sea change in the Indian attitude towards adoption, with apprehension giving way to a new receptiveness. Earlier adoptive parents were very finicky about the child's parentage and religion. Some even tried to estimate the child's IQ. Today parents are realising that far more important than genetics is environment.

Take Shashi Kumar, a rubber estate owner in Tamil Nadu, and his wife, Raji. All their fears were laid to rest after they adopted six-month-old Ayswarya. Three years later, she is the brightest child in her nursery school. Shashi Kumar and Raji aren't the only ones. The number of adopted children has been steadily rising: from 398 in 1988 it went up to 757 in 1989, and last year to 2,300. Says Deenaz Damania, a Bangalore-based adoption expert: "There has been a shift from adult-oriented to child-oriented adoption."

Earlier, people opted for adoption to be able to hand over their property to the child. Now, as Damania says, "it is to fulfill the need of the child to have a home". Take M. Chittaranjan and wife Rohini. Their life changed dramatically after they adopted Shuba. Says Chittaranjan: "We are at peace with ourselves now."

Significantly, with the stigma attached to adoption vanishing, adoptive parents have also

MAHESH BHATT



The Lobos with their three natural children and two adopted daughters

With a change in the Indian attitude towards adoption, parents with natural children and even single women are receptive to the idea.

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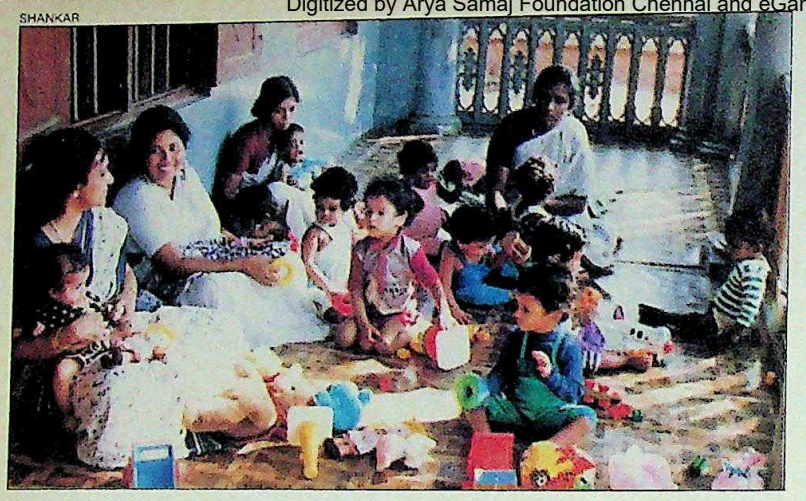
SHANKAR



An adoption agency in Kerala: filling the void

shrugged off earlier prejudices. Earlier they wanted babies that were fair, good looking and male. No longer. Now, dark parents are realising that dark children look like their own. Also, preference for male children is diminishing. Statistics show that nearly as many females are adopted. In Kerala, for instance, girls are preferred. Says Nagappan Nair, general secretary, Kerala State Council for Child Welfare, an adoption agency at Trivandrum: "The feeling now is that girls would be more loyal and loving, and the crutch in their old age."

Adoptive parents are also turning a blind eye to creed. This is evident from a couple who unabashedly asked a Bombay agency for a child only with royal Maratha blood, but ultimately chose a Muslim child. Said Padma Subbiah, manager of an adoption agency in Bangalore: "Once the parents see the lovely children, their preferences vanish."

Even destitute children are no longer untouchable. From the upper classes to the middle classes, they are all going in for these children of a lesser god. What's more, these children have become more socially accepted. Says Bombay's Ranjit Rodricks, 17, who was adopted by Anita and Gordon Rodricks when he was eight weeks old: "No one ever passed cheap comments in school even though they knew I was adopted."

One reason why such children have been absorbed into the mainstream is because trained social workers have got into the act. They counsel couples about what adoption means for them and for the child. They tell the parents that the fact of the child's adoption should not be hidden from the child. Maria and Roger Fernandes from Goa, who have two daughters aged four and one, are waiting for their girls to grow up so that they can tell them that they were adopted—but are still their very own.

Interestingly, now even parents with natural children of their own are going in for adoption. Aloma and David Lobo from Bangalore already had three sons when they adopted a girl. Three years later all four children asked for another sister and the Lobos readily

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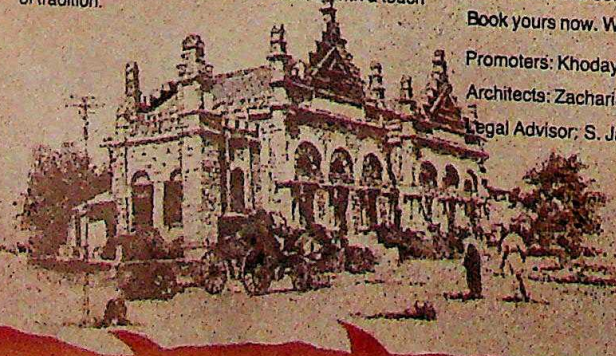

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TEDIOUS PROCEDURE

- The couple registers with an adoption agency giving details like income, property and a gynaecologist's report.
- Through interviews the agency ascertains whether the couple can cope with the challenges of adoption. Their marital relationship, family backgrounds and plans to bring up the child are looked into.
- A social worker calls on the couple to assess if the child would be well cared for.
- Satisfied, the agency counsels the couple and their families, driving away imaginary fears and pointing out the reality.
- After a waiting period—that may last a year—the couple are shown a child.
- The agency files an application—in the city civil court if the parents are Hindu and in the district or high court if non-Hindu as per the law. The court formalities may take up to three months. The court and agency fees work out to Rs 5,000.
- The child is given to the adoptive parents. But the agency keeps in touch with the family for at least five years and submits reports to the court on the child's progress.

adopted another girl. Says Aloma: "It has been sheer joy all the way." Apart from natural parents, even some single persons are taking to adoption. Bangalore, for instance, has about half a dozen single women who are doing very well with adopted children.

The fact that adoption has come out of the closet is evident from the fact that adoptive parents around the country are organising to discuss their problems and fears. The Adoptive Parents Association in Bangalore with around 65 members has gone a long way in boosting the parents' confidence.

DESPITE the positive attitude that many couples have towards adoption, there are many who continue to resist the idea. They resort to expensive methods like test tube babies even though only 8 per cent of them are successful. Dr Feruza Parikh, head of the department of infertility management and assisted reproduction at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital says she warns every couple of the low success rate of the test tube method.

But the couples remain undeterred. Smita Gore, a nurse in Bombay, now married for 17 years, has undergone 11 operations as her fallopian tubes are blocked. Although the operations have been unsuccessful, she hasn't been able to come around to the idea of adoption. Says Cynthia D'Sa from Bangalore who has an adopted son: "It's a pity thousands of childless couples go through such loneliness refusing to adopt."

It is more of a pity as there are around

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MAHESH BHATT

Rohini and Chittaranjan with adopted daughter Shuba

Significantly with the stigma attached to adoption vanishing, adoptive parents are shrugging off their prejudices about colour, creed and gender.

38.06 million orphans below 14 years out of which 12 million are destitute, according to the International Institute of Population Studies at Bombay. Paradoxically, even as there are thousands of destitute children waiting to be adopted, there are around 50 adoption agencies with long waiting lists. This shortage has led to a great deal of racketeering—particularly in the area of foreign adoptions. As foreigners are willing to pay any sum, there are agencies that clandestinely charge thousands of rupees and give Indian parents the go by.

But a historic Supreme Court judgement in 1984 changed all that. Justice Bhagwati's judgement said that the first priority of any agency should be in-country adoption, with Indian parents living abroad second on the list and foreign parents last. Moreover, in order to get government recognition, an agency has to ensure that at least 50 per cent of its adoptions are within the country.

However, foreign couples are still the only takers for handicapped children. Deepa, an abandoned dwarf child in Calcutta, was adopted by a Michigan dwarf couple who have a specially designed house with low furniture and a shallow swimming pool. Also, a female child born in Bangalore without arms and legs was adopted by a nurse in the US. Says Padma Subbiah: "Foreigners specify that if any correction or treatment needs to be done for the child, they had rather do it in a foreign country than in India."

Although this kind of 'special needs' adoption hasn't caught on in India as yet, it is, as Damania says, "only a matter of time before Indians go in for similar adoptions". And going by the current trend, that time doesn't seem too far away.

ADOPTION LAWS

Wide Gaps

THOUGH adoption is a growing trend, India doesn't have a uniform or codified adoption law. Hindus can fall back on the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (1956) where they become legal parents and their adopted child enjoys all property rights. Adoption by a Hindu is irrevocable but non-Hindus have no such privileges for they have to follow the discriminatory Guardianship and Wards Act (1890)

When a non-Hindu adopts, the act does not give him parental status; he is merely a guardian and the child only a ward. The child has no right to inherit property or legally be a part of the family. Says Meera Desai, executive secretary, Indian Association for Promotion of Adoption at Bombay: "This discriminatory law has to go."

Reacting to the discriminatory law, courts now insist that non-Hindus who adopt a child should keep aside some money or start a recurring bank account in the name of the child. Says Dr Armaity Desai, director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay: "It is worthwhile for the Government to risk itself on behalf of the child even if it involves the wrath of some fundamentalists, by disconnecting adoption from religion."

—RAMESH MENON

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COMPUTER EDUCATION

THE BYTE OF SUCCESS

A conspicuous change is taking place in the Indian job market. Increasingly people are opting for computer literacy programmes which in turn is spawning a buzzing teaching industry.

By ALOK TIWARI

WHEN Deepak Sehgal, a 38-year-old child specialist in Delhi, wanted to streamline operations at his clinic, he took a two-month computer course and installed a Personal Computer (PC). He also made his three secretaries attend the course. Was the effort worth it? "Absolutely," he says.

Kamini Sood, 23, a mathematics teacher in the capital, is doing a one-year diploma course at one of the mushrooming computer education boutiques. Unlike Sehgal, she isn't so sure how exactly the course is going to help her. "It might help me get a promotion," she volunteers.

Sanjay Punjabi, 24, a gold medalist from the Bombay-based Silk and Art Silk Mills Research Association and a business management diploma holder, thinks the course that's really going to be of some use to him is a Rs 3,800 one conducted by a computer institute on weekends for two months. Called 'Managerial Advantage through the PC', the course—Punjabi believes—will help him a lot as his trading-cum-polyester yarn texturising business takes to computers in a big way. "What I learn at this course can be applied in a number of related fields of business."

The computer bug has bytten Indians as never before. Sehgal, Sood and Punjabi were three in a lakh-and-a-half throng of Indians trying to reorder life around the microchip, the video screen and the plastic keyboard last year. Willing to spend vast sums to achieve their goals, they have collectively spawned a growth industry in computer education. One guesstimate is that there are over 2,000 private schools catering to this appetite for the Big Byte.

From professionals like Sehgal—who uses his PC to keep a record of his patients and for accounting—to managers trying to grasp the intricacies of the big systems their companies are installing, from parents keen on giving their children the computer edge to eager school and college leavers, everybody is jumping on to the computer bandwagon. And they are putting their money where their hopes lie. Anything from Rs 750 to Rs 1,500 for short-term courses and upwards of Rs 10,000 for the longer duration ones.

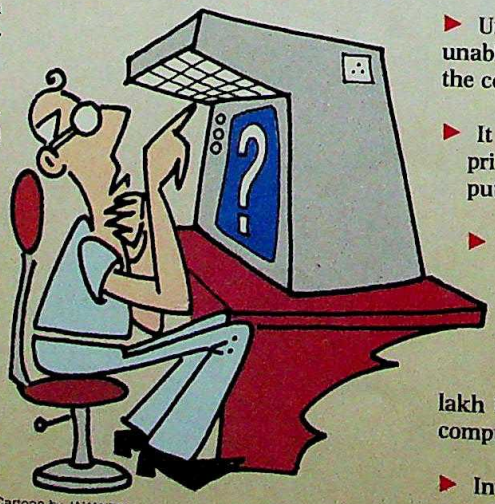
Luckily, a manpower-hungry industry may lap up almost all of them. Computer production is targeted to jump from Rs 750 crore in 1989-90 to Rs 2,800 crore by 1994-95. In software exports alone are slated to rise almost 12-fold over the same time-span. For that kind of growth the industry will need more than two lakh computer professionals in five years.

That's why boom signals are flashing on computer screens. The Byte Barons are all furiously expanding the education mill even as the industry is attracting new entrants. Says R.B. Bala, regional manager of Uptron India Ltd: "It is a very lucrative business."

He should know. A late entrant in the education field, Uptron has already set up 24 franchise centres across the country and hopes to have a total of 55 in another six months. Bombay-based Datapro Information Technology will nearly double its teaching centres to 100 in 1991; NIIT (formerly the National Institute of Information Technology) will triple its 33-strong network by 1992.

PITFALLS & GROWTH SIGNALS

- Quality of computer instruction greatly varies as there is no standardised syllabus.
- To cash in on the demand fly-by-night operators have entered the fray.
- There could be 10-15 lakh people with access to computers, but with little knowledge of how to use it.
- The exorbitant fees charged by the institutes is a worrying factor.
- Many who emerge from the institutes will be stuck at low and middle-level jobs.



Cartoon by JAYANTO

- Universities and colleges are unable to meet the job demands of the computer sector.
- It is estimated that over 2,000 private schools are offering computer courses.
- Computer production is projected to jump from Rs 750 crore in 1989-90 to Rs 2,800 crore in 1994-95.
- About one and a half lakh Indians are trying to acquire computer skills.
- India will need about two lakh computer professionals in five years.

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Cartoon by AJIT NINAN and ANIL SHARMA

Informatics Computer Systems (ICS) is increasing its number from 28 to 40 within a year's span.

The student's paper chase affords computer schools an opportunity for money chase. Apple Industries Ltd, with interests in leasing and information technology, has seen its gross profits jump from just Rs 93 lakh in 1985-86 to Rs 8.58 crore in 1989-90. It presently has 30 teaching centres, nine owned and 21 franchised. Many multinationals have also jumped into the education fray. Digital Equipment (India) Ltd, a 40 per cent owned Indian subsidiary of Digital Equipment of the US and one of the country's top software exporters, began education operations in July 1989 and achieved a turnover of Rs 1.3 crore in the very first year. Says J.P. Nag, Digital's branch manager (Enterprise Integration Services): "We hope to grow by nearly 100 per cent every year at least for the next few years."

Clearly, the education mill isn't grinding slowly. Apart from the big national chains there are at least 10 to 15 established regional firms doing a roaring business. A student doing a one-year basic course generally pays up to Rs 10,000. The fees for longer duration courses can go upwards of Rs 10,000 to Rs 16,000. For the shorter stuff—like an introductory course—fees oscillate in the Rs 750 to Rs 1,500 range.

The schools have Rajiv Gandhi to thank, for it was during his reign that computers began proliferating. *Computers Today*, a monthly magazine, estimates the country's current PC base at close to three lakh. Add the bigger machines—mini-computers and mainframes—and it's not difficult to imagine at least 10-15 lakh people with access to the computer but with little formal knowledge on how to use them. Computer schools are tapping this well of ignorance and are offering packages for everybody: managers, lawyers, doctors, chartered accountants, journalists, housewives and students.

THESE institutes are tapping areas never thought of before. Where the Government's Computer Literacy and Studies in Schools (CLASS) programme—aimed at creating basic computer awareness among school kids—failed, a company like ICS is successfully running a similar programme for schoolchildren right from Standard I. The number of schools subscribing to ICS's package: 250 in 120 towns.

Not that all computer schools teach students the magic mantra to open the doors of opportunity. For springing up along with the established companies have been many fly-by-night operators with the sole intention of cashing in their chips. These operators flaunt affiliations from vague foreign firms and make outlandish promises of jobs. One firm in Delhi was advertising claims guaranteeing employment to all its pupils failing which they would be paid an "unemployment allowance".

"All this can be very confusing for the parents," says J.R. Arora, president of the Delhi chapter of the Computer Society of India (CSI). More so when schools lacking sufficient infrastructure quietly fold up, leaving students in lurch. "More firms have closed down than have survived," says Anil Malhotra of ICS. But Vijay K. Thadani of NIIT feels the shaking out phase is over and the industry is maturing and a student can make out a good school from a bad one *(see box)*.

Despite the optimism, the problems remain as the quality of instruction at private schools varies. This is because currently each school draws up its own syllabus and conducts its own examination. There is no independent evaluation of their performance. "It's a very mixed bag of things," says Brigadier V.M. Sundaram of CSI who is in charge of implementing a scheme of accreditation for private computer schools. The scheme has been drawn up by the Government's Department of Electronics (DOE) in order to standardise the syllabus and introduce quality control, with independent examinations being conducted by CSI.

Under the scheme, the department will accord recognition to four levels of courses ranging from the basic 'O' level to the advanced 'C'. The syllabi for these courses will be DOE-prescribed, and the schools applying for recognition will have to fulfil certain criteria relating to teaching and infrastructure. The first of the national 'O' level examinations is slated to be held in July 1991.

In an effort to weed out the non-professionals and unscrupulous operators, the industry has initiated a move for evolving a code of ethics through the Manufacturers Association of Information Technology (MAIT), with conforming members being entitled to display a

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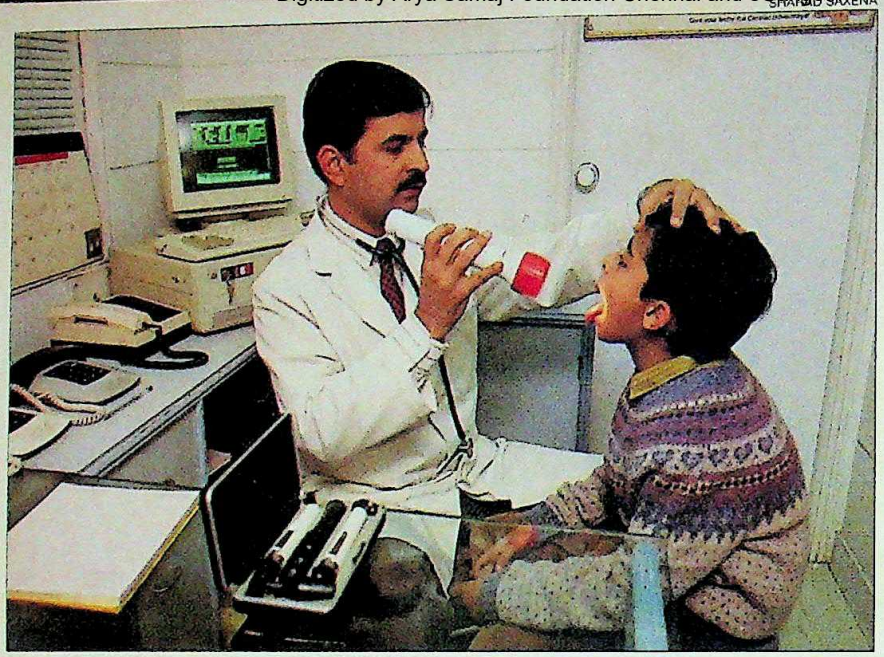

Deepak Sehgal, paediatrician, took computer lessons to streamline his work

Professionals like doctors, corporate managers, parents anxious for their children's future, and school and college leavers are all being drawn into the promised land of computers.

distinguishing logo. Malhotra, who also heads the training division of MAIT, says: "Eight schools have already been given recognition."

Some industry watchers worry about the exorbitant fees charged by computer institutes. "They are fleecing the students," says Dr P.S. Grover, head of Delhi University's department of computer science. As many institutes employ mere part-timers to run the classes, Grover has a valid point. And that means the employability of the products of these schools may be restricted to low and

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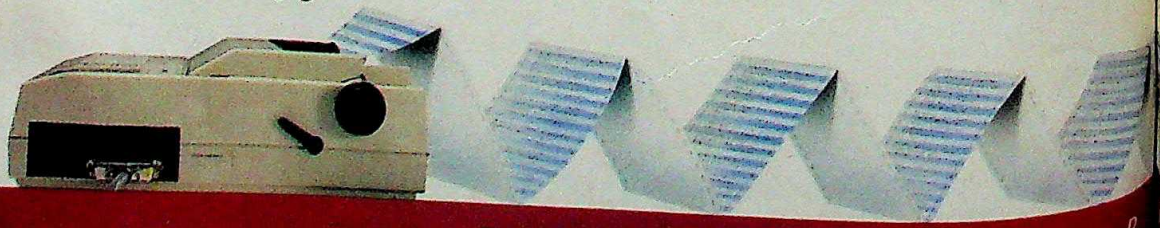

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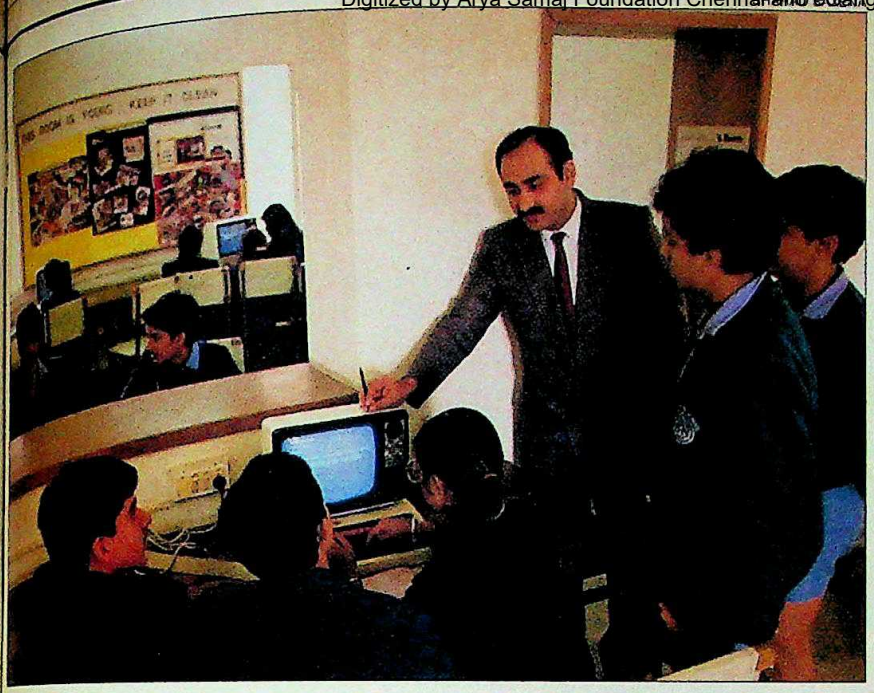

Anil Malhotra of ICS says 250 schools in 120 towns subscribe to their computer literacy packages.

While the growth in computer schools is very satisfying, it does not necessarily mean that the students coming out of them will find appropriate employment.

middle level jobs, if at all.

Industrywallas pooh-pooh this scare scenario and plead not-guilty to the charge of profiteering. Pointing to the industry's capital-intensive nature and the high cost of developing syllabi which constantly need updating, Thadani says: "NIIT invests 10 to 12 per cent of turnover in R&D." On an education division turnover of Rs 16 crore, that tots up to a hefty Rs 1.5 crore to Rs 2 crore. Malhotra says the industry also has to invest heavily in promotion because of the need to demystify computers. "We

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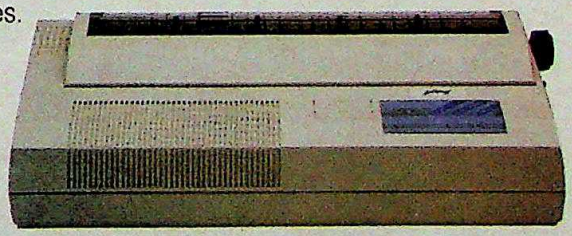

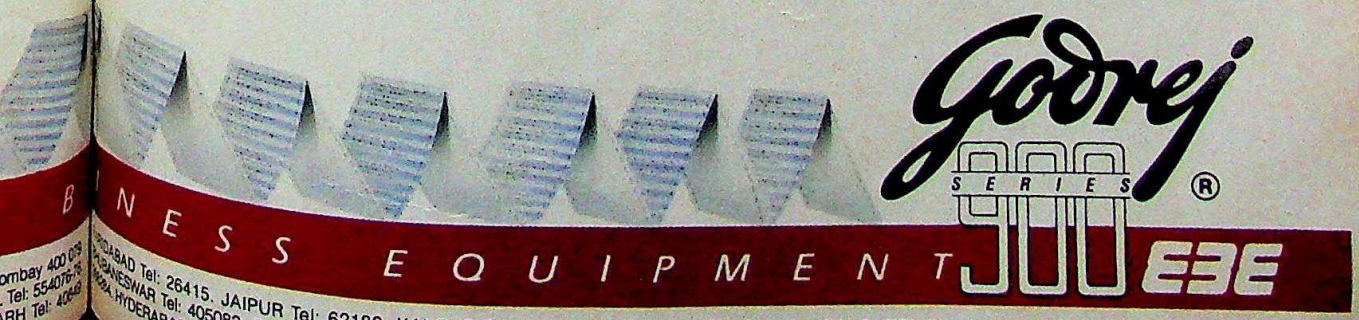

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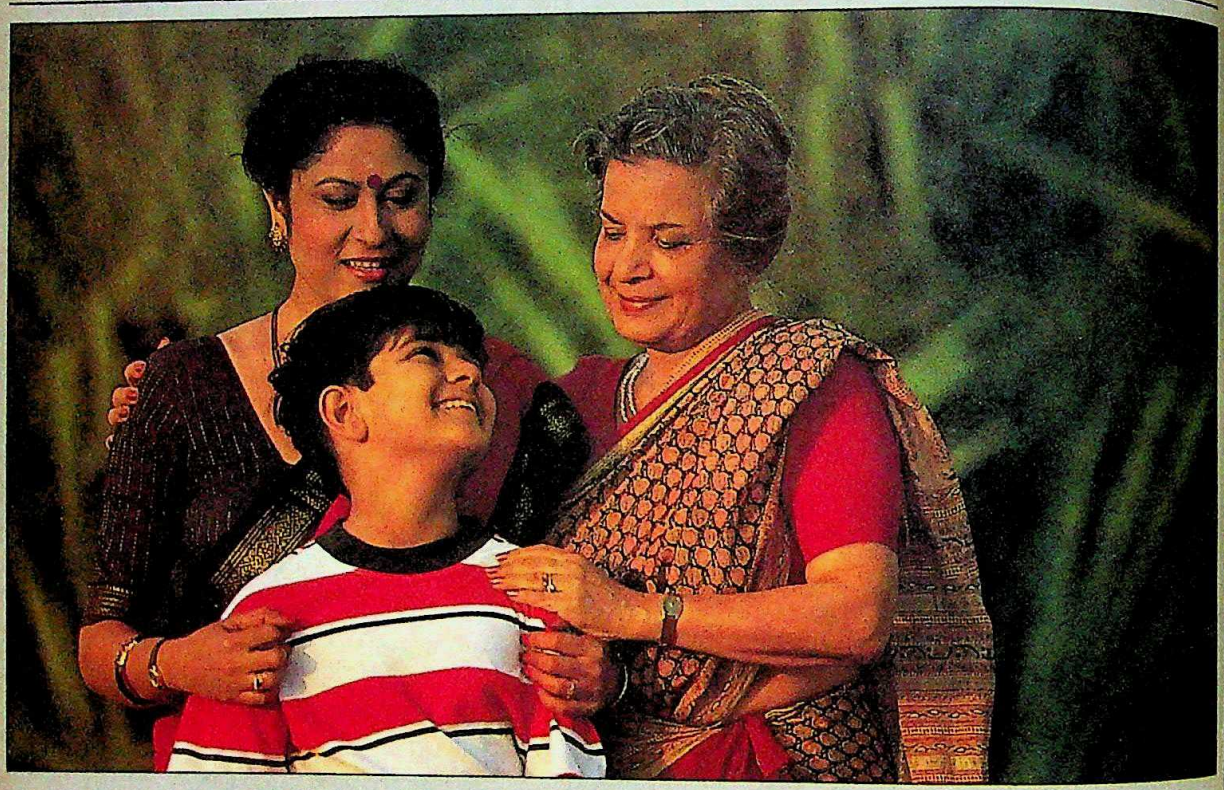

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actually had to put out advertisements saying you don't have to be a science student to learn computers," he says. Besides, all the major schools generate carry-home course material, the cost of which has to be included in the fees. Still, with industry profitability hovering around 20 per cent of turnover, there is no denying that there's pots of money in it. And there is scope for lowering the fees.

But one reason why that may not happen is the formal sector's inability to meet the manpower needs. Says N. Vittal, DOE secretary: "The formal sector (universities, engineering colleges) moves at a certain pace. It cannot supply the numbers required." Nor does the formal sector want to. Says Grover: "If we start giving diplomas and certificates in computers it will dilute our other more comprehensive programmes." So while universities concentrate on the higher end of computer learning, the private sector supplies the bulk of skilled manpower needed. The industry is loath to admit that it caters to the lower end of the employment spectrum but Thadani says as much: "University courses are knowledge-oriented while we are more need-based and respond more quickly to industry requirements."

In that respect, the private institutes have an impressive track record. While nobody guarantees a job to everybody, students doing reasonably well are ensured placement. That is more a reflection on the computer industry's appetite for people than on the quality of education at the institutes. But nobody's complaining too much.

COMPUTER SCHOOLS

Making the Right Choice

WHAT do they teach you at computer schools? It depends on what you want to learn. For professionals there are specially tailored courses to help them do their work better with the aid of computers. Most long-term courses are intended to familiarise students with basic concepts in computing. And contrary to the general belief, you don't need to have a science background for these courses. Says Anil Malhotra of ICS: "Eighty per cent of the jobs in the industry are non-technical."

In addition, the long duration courses are expected to give you a thorough grounding in several languages—computer languages, that is—Basic, Cobol, Pascal and 'C'. Students are also taught basic operating systems like MS-DOS (Microsoft Disc Operating System) and Unix. Good schools also throw in additional options in specific application areas like financial accounting, inventory control and personnel management. Besides, there are training packages on database management, financial spreadsheets, word processing, etc.

The general idea, however, is to offer courses in modular form, which allows students to choose the package they want. If you are confused about the maze of courses offered, an in-house counsellor should be able to help. To pick out the right school, look out for these tell-tale signs:

► Reputation: A well-established school does not necessarily mean a big school or one that's part of a national chain. Some of the smaller ones do an excellent job as well.

► Counselling: A good school should be able to offer the services of counsellors for selecting the right courses and options.

► Selection: If anybody can get into the course, you've probably got into the wrong school, unless it's supposed to be a general computer appreciation course.

► Opt out if your school crams four students to a PC.

► Course content: Does the school have adequate course material and books? Are the teachers full-time or part-time? How much computer time do you get? About 50 per cent of course time should be for practicals.

The bottomline, of course, is a job—if that is your goal.

—ALOK TIWARI

SHARAD SAXENA

Computer class in progress at Delhi's Modern School

Contrary to prevalent belief, you don't need to have a science background to take a computer course as a majority of the jobs in the industry are non-technical.

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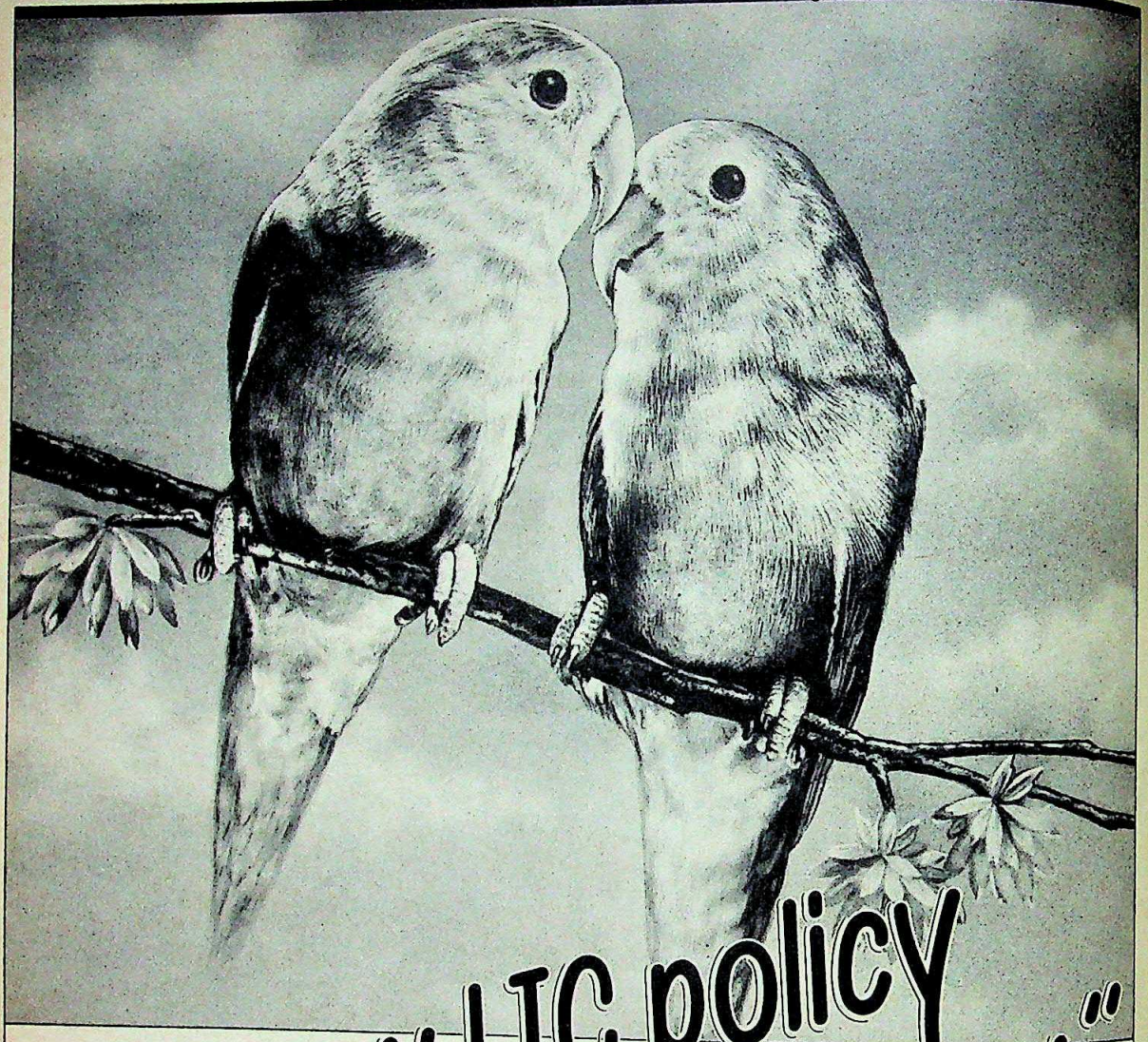

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NARROWING THE GULF

PRE-BUDGET lobbying is old hat. But this year seems to be different. Apart from the fact that the usual deluge of memoranda showered on North Block is a more manageable flow this time, what's significant is that almost no business lobby is actually working overtime for tax cuts. On the contrary, industrialists are actually telling the Government how it can raise more money. Representatives of the Confederation of Engineering Industry, during their pre-budget confabulations with Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, made it clear that engineering companies were willing to pay up—and fast—in the overall national interest. Their suggestion: the Government could change the schedule for collecting advance instalments of income tax. Another example: knowing for certain that it's going to be hit for cash, the cigarette industry is trying to contain the damage. One lobby, led by ITC says it would prefer higher excise provided the levy is made on the basis of cigarette length, as is the case now. Rival Sanjay Dalmia's GTC wants to pay more by a shift in taxation to the ad valorem basis. That is, on the basis of the price of cigarettes. The Gulf, it seems, has narrowed the gulf between government and industry on taxation.

SLICK STORY

THE Estimates Committee of Parliament is examining the controversial decision of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) to flog 90-and-odd wells in the Bombay High region in the mid-'80s. Last fortnight, the committee, headed by BJP MP Jaswant Singh, asked ONGC to furnish details of a report prepared five years ago by S.C. Roychoudhury, the then head of ONGC's Institute of Reservoir Studies. After Roychoudhury raised doubts about the high rate of extraction from Bombay High wells, he was hounded out of the organisation. Now that the tables have been turned, the present ONGC management is keen on making amends and has appointed him as an adviser to an official group handling exploration activities.

NEW PROJECTS

CHLORIDE Industries Ltd is diversifying into integrated non-conventional power systems for remote villages where there's no electricity. It is taking up turnkey contracts to set up solar-powered village electrification systems run on specially designed battery systems. It has bagged a Rs 1-crore project for providing electricity for fish farming in West Bengal. Among the other projects: a railway signalling system for South-Eastern Railway, a cathodic protection system for Indian Oil Corporation and an integrated power project in West Bengal.

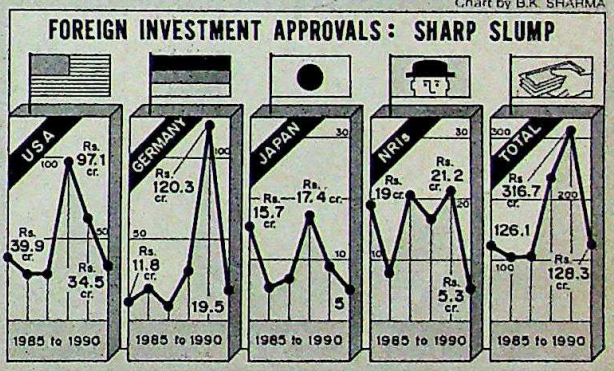
PUBLIC SECTOR WONDER

THE National Housing Bank (NHB), in its two-and-a-half year old existence in the field of housing finance, has become a public sector wonder. It has functioned without even a formal board of directors thus far while presiding over Rs 300 crore of loan disbursals. A board there was to have been, comprising—apart from the chairman—two nominees of the Reserve Bank, the secretaries of the Union rural and urban development ministries, the chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation, the additional secretary (banking) and the chairman of the Indian Banks' Association, among others. But the NHB has got along well without a board, thank you. It only has a managing council. In fact, last month even its chairman K.S. Sastry was sent off on assignment to Africa.

PROVERBIAL SLIP

THANKS to the xenophobic attitude of Indian businessmen, bureaucrats and politicians, approvals of foreign investment dropped dramatically from Rs 316.7 crore in 1989 to Rs 128.3 crore last year. But even these figures are deceptive, for the actual inflow of direct foreign investment during a particular year—which the

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Reserve Bank of India, for some inexplicable reason, treats as a closely-guarded secret—is usually lower than the figure of approvals. Thus, in 1989 Germany apparently became the largest foreign investor in India by pipping the US to first place. This was on account of the inclusion of the proposed export-oriented petrochemicals complex in Madras, being set up jointly by German firm Linde and the R.P. Goenka group, in the approvals figure. But this proposal is yet to take off and till date, little or no money has been invested by Linde in the project. All of which goes to highlight the proverbial slip between the cup and the lip.

FULL CREDIT

CITIBANK is trying a card trick that's new to India. Having relaunched its Diners' Club card as a super-premium bit of plastic (entry fee: Rs 2,500), it is now gearing up to segment the rest of the market with four more cards—two each with Mastercard and Visa, the two top international credit card organisations. Positioned just below Diners will be gold coloured versions with Mastercard and Visa hook-ups, followed at the bottom end with blue cards. That will make five cards in all for Citi, which claims a 75,000-strong membership for Diners.

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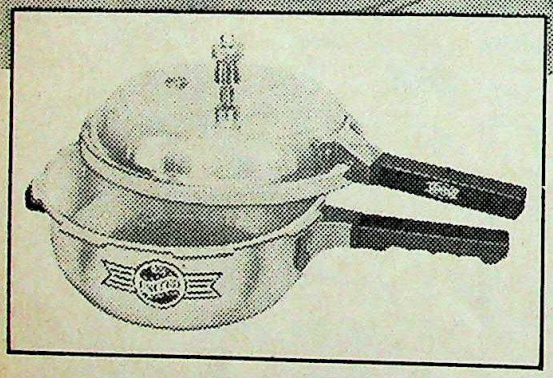

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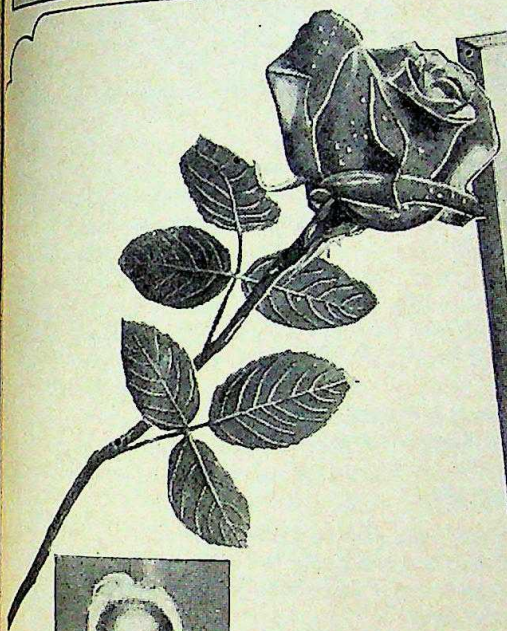

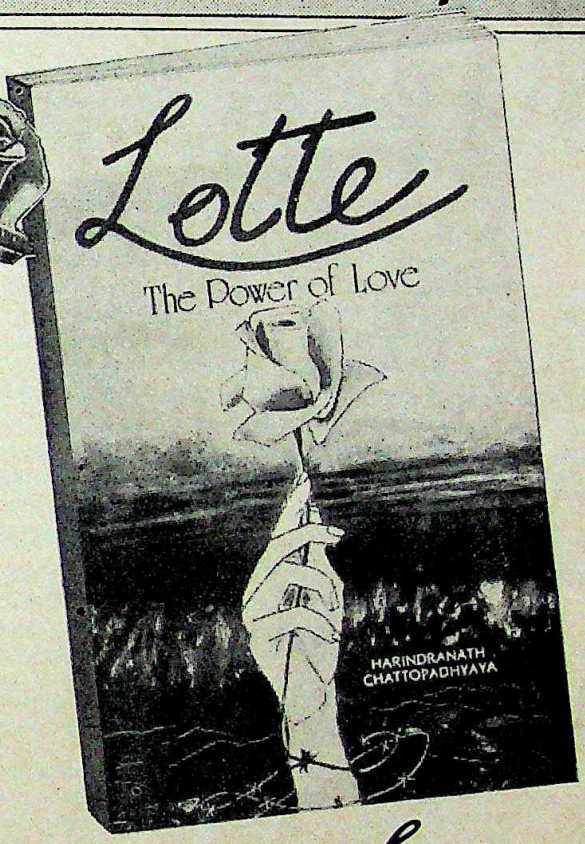

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OIL IMPORTS

Paying a Price

India buys crude at questionable rates

IT'S a Wednesday afternoon. The scene: a conference room in the international trading division of Indian Oil Corporation's (IOC) headquarters in the capital. Officials from IOC and the ministries of petroleum, commerce and finance are scanning the agenda notes handed over to them two hours earlier. In a corner of the room, a computer terminal keeps flashing the day's crude oil prices at Dubai, Rotterdam, Singapore and New York.

Suddenly, the time for action is at hand. Two seals on the door to an adjacent room, where a telex machine is spewing rolls of paper, are broken open. The rolls contain various offers made in response to a tender for oil purchases floated by IOC two days earlier. As the assembled officials take a peek at the numbers and begin to discuss them, it's obvious that decision time is nigh. The multi-million dollar questions: To buy or not to buy? From whom and when? On what terms of credit? From which port? And above all, at what price?

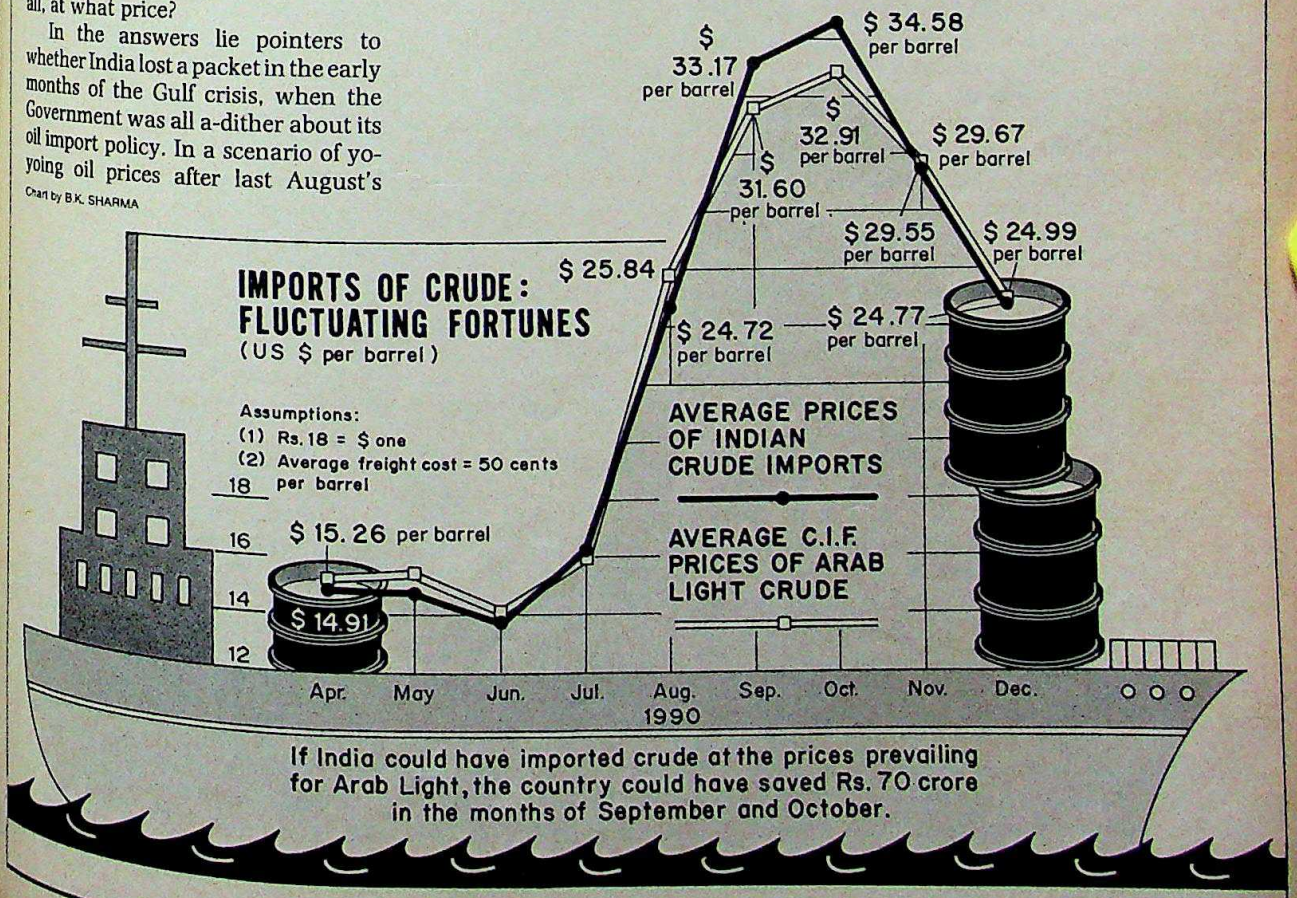
In the answers lie pointers to whether India lost a packet in the early months of the Gulf crisis, when the Government was all a-dither about its oil import policy. In a scenario of yo-yoing oil prices after last August's annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, there is some evidence to indicate that India ended up paying hefty sums for crude imports, perhaps much more than it need have if it had played it a bit cooler.

The average price at which India imported crude jumped from $16.30 a barrel in July to $24.72 the following month. The prices then zoomed to $33.17 and $34.58 in September and October. During those two months, the landed market prices of Arab Light, an important West Asian benchmark crude, were a good $1.5 per barrel lower than the prices India paid *(see chart)*. A simple arithmetical calculation shows that the country could have saved around Rs 70 crore in September and October if it had purchased crude close to the prevailing market prices for Arab Light. And this was quite within the realms of possibility since India's crude imports in April-December 1990 were contracted well below Arab Light levels, barring the months of July, September and October.

Was it a collective error of judgement? Perhaps. For the Government has laid out carefully devised procedures which have to be followed by an empowered standing committee headed by the IOC chairman to undertake imports of crude oil and petroleum products. Theoretically, this committee is answerable to none but the Government's auditors, not even to the Union Cabinet. But the systems are not foolproof, for crucial information often leaks out. Besides there are political pressures to short-circuit procedures and tailor rules to favour certain bidders, as has been well-documented in the 1981 Kuo oil case.

IOC officials seek to explain the price divergence by pointing out that Arab Light is not the only variety of crude the country imports. Further, the drying-up of supplies of 4.5 million tonnes of Iraqi oil, which were supposed to come to India on the Soviet account, meant that crude had to be lifted from ports on the Black Sea, adding over $1 per barrel in freight charges. Some relatively expensive supplies also came from Malaysia at that time. Besides contract prices are market-related and vary depending on the specific dates ships are loaded. (Contract prices are

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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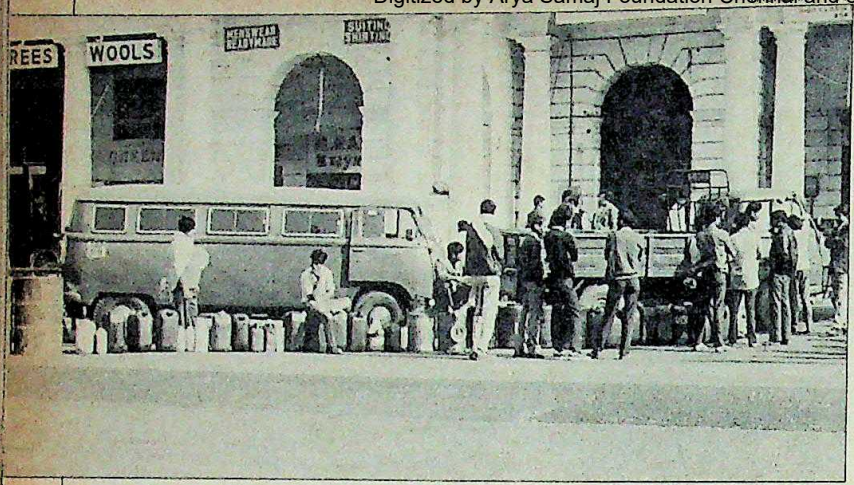

Diesel queue in Delhi: panic reaction

often 11-day averages, which take into account the prices prevailing five days before and five after loading).

Moreover, say IOC sources, the oil market was highly volatile in September and October and, at that time, even experts were unsure if a smooth flow of supplies would be maintained. Whether these uncertainties adequately explain the differences between the prices paid by India and those ruling in international markets will be ascertained by auditors after many months. Even the infamous Kuo oil scandal—in which the country incurred a 'national' loss of Rs 9 crore because the then petroleum minister P.C. Sethi overruled the recommendations of both the petroleum secretary and the IOC chairman-led empowered committee—surfaced more than a year after the ambiguous deal had actually been negotiated.

While it is too early to smell hanky-panky in 1990's oil import deals, what is making matters worse for India is the fact that while crude prices have eased after the outbreak of the Gulf war, product prices have not. And that means basically diesel, kerosene and aviation fuel. The country imports nearly a third of its requirements of kerosene, and around one-sixth of its diesel and aviation fuel.

Consequently, India has been hit hard by the non-availability of some 1.5 million tonnes of these products from the Kuwaiti refinery, which accounts for a substantial portion of world capacity in light and middle distillates like kerosene and diesel. The same products are now being bought from other sources and piped to Saudi ports on the Red Sea for shipment—resulting in landed prices going up by 30-40 cents per barrel. The logistics of lifting supplies from a war zone pose their own problems. At one stage, the Shipping Corporation of India was reluctant to ply its vessels to Saudi ports. IOC, however, managed to convince the Saudis to send a tanker to a point on the high seas off Fujeira where ship-to-ship transfers were effected.

Moves are afoot in the Commerce Ministry headed by Subramanian Swamy to remove oil imports from IOC's purview.

The bottleneck in diesel and kerosene supplies may explain the big queues back home, but oil industry officials are at pains to assert that there is no real shortage. Their explanation for the queues: just panic buying.

WHILE users seem convinced that there has been mismanagement of petro-product supplies—which oil industry officials deny—the refuelling of US Air Force planes has stirred a different kind of hornets' nest. These planes have obviously not been subject to the 25 per cent cut in aviation fuel supplies applicable to all airlines using Indian airports, including the country's carriers, IA and AI. Since nearly 100 US planes have refuelled over the last month and since each plane will have consumed at least 30,000 litres, the value of the total amount of aviation fuel used by the Americans works out to well over Rs 1 crore. That amount is, of course, a drop in relation to the total oil import bill, which looks likely to nudge Rs 10,000 crore, more than one-and-a-half times the Rs 6,400-crore allocated in this fiscal year's budget. It is also extremely clear that the country has achieved only limited success in curtailing consumption. Crude imports are thus likely to be around 0.5 million tonnes higher than the 1989-90 amount of 19.5 million tonnes, while product imports are expected to be 1.5 million tonnes higher than last year's level of 6.5 million tonnes.

Besides the limited success in holding back demand, an important reason why India is having to import more than what was initially envisaged is the shortfall in domestic crude production during 1990-91. Production is likely to undershoot the 35.9-million tonne target by around 10 per cent. Sources in the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) say the shortfall is on account of a number of factors, including disturbed conditions in Assam and lower production from Bombay High, Gandhar and the Krishna-Godavari basin.

Stalled projects are another reason why ONGC has failed to deliver. In the last couple of years, not a single ONGC project to produce more oil and gas has been sanctioned. Says an ONGC official: "If our pending projects are cleared we could conceivably increase our production from the present 31 million tonnes a year to 46 million tonnes in little or no time." According to an official performance review for 1990-91, ONGC's target for exploratory drilling was missed because of "non-availability of certain owned and charter hired rigs". This points to poor management of resources.

These problems may be sorted out in due course, but large oil imports are the nearer term reality. Meanwhile, an oil slick is headed IOC's way, with the Commerce Ministry under Subramanian Swamy suggesting that its own department of supplies be handed over the task of undertaking oil imports instead of IOC. It also claims that the supply department has the requisite expertise, a contention IOC sources dispute. If the secretary, supply, replaces the IOC chairman as head of the empowered standing committee on imports—as a Commerce Ministry note suggests—the oil import scene may get even murkier than it already is.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA and W.P.S. SIDHU

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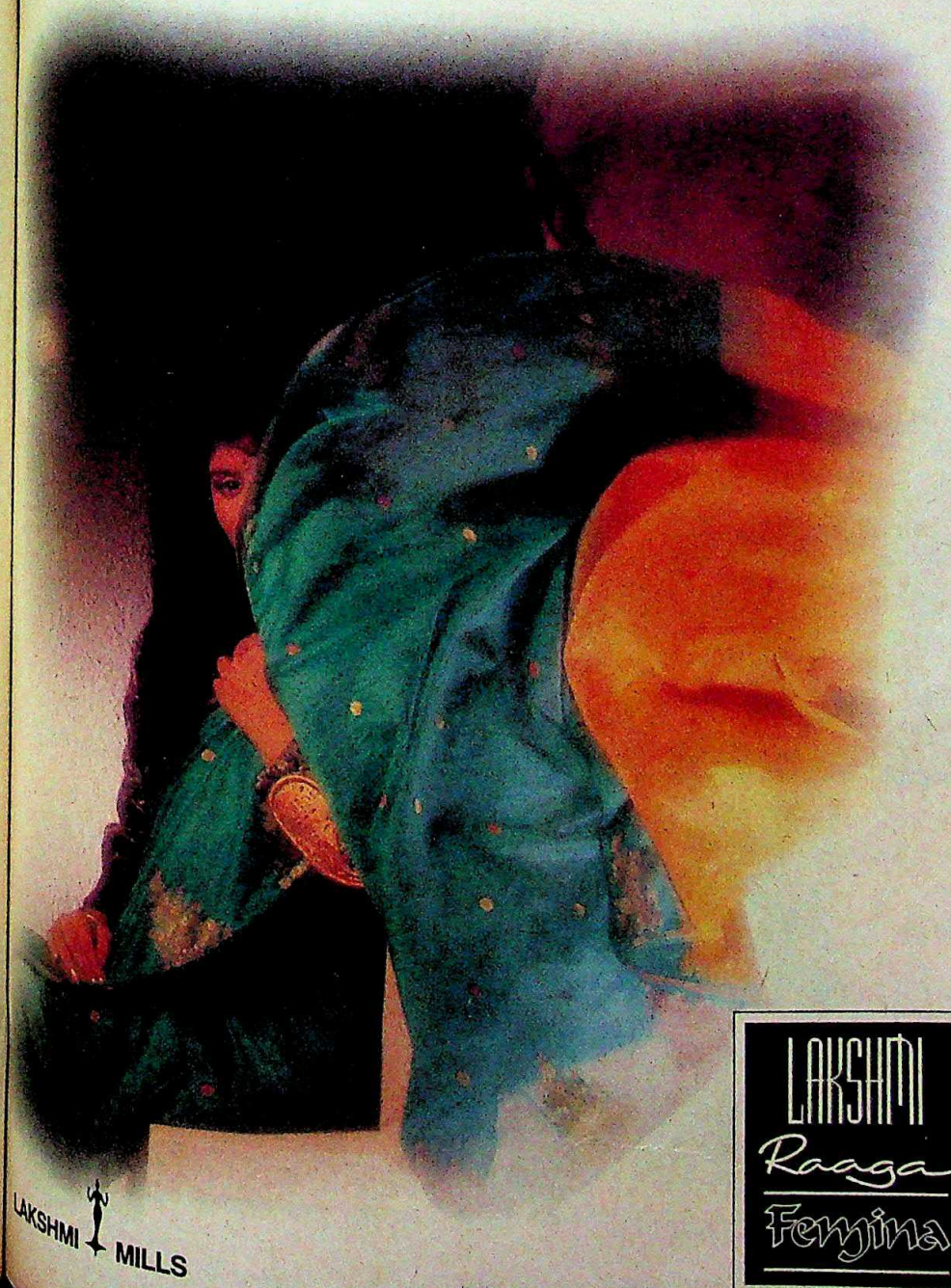

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HOUSING FINANCE

New Options

Moves to recycle loans faster

SECURITISATION is the horrendous name of a new game—new to India, that is—in big-ticket financing. But the long and short of it is simple: conversion of long-term debt into short. The Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) set the ball rolling last month when it announced a plan to "securitise" a part of its housing loan portfolio. The gleam in the HDFC's eye is explained by the prospect of recycling old home loans back as new loans faster than before. Says Deepak Parekh, managing director: "Once this instrument is marketed, it will help us raise more resources which we can then plough back into housing finance."

When lenders lend, they don't want to wait for 15 years for the original borrower to pay up fully. Thanks to securitisation, they can now chop up their loan portfolios into smaller bundles of shorter term debt and sell the package to investors. They do this by floating bonds backed by the collateral against which the original loans were given. When HDFC does the same, the money you owe it for helping you finance your little shack may in reality be owed to someone else—the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), the General Insurance Corporation (GIC) or even a company.

Helping the HDFC will be the Bombay-based Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS), which will play midwife, merchant banker and market maker for the new securities. IL&FS will help bundle an appropriate bunch of housing loans, decide the interest rates, and offer two-way quotes (that is, both buy and sell) on the mortgaged-backed securities. Says Manohar J. Pherwani, IL&FS chairman: "It is only a matter of time before this instrument is ready."

But hurdles remain. Before the package can hit the market, two critical issues have to be resolved: taxation and stamp duty. Incomes from housing loans are currently 40 per cent exempt from income tax. The question: will HDFC continue to get the exemption after hawking off its loans? Problem two relates to the fact that all real estate transactions attract high stamp duty; if that applies to securitised housing loans, the scheme loses shine.

The housing arena hasn't been a happy hunting ground for innovators. Builders Lokhandwala tried to launch a real estate participation scheme (REPS) to enable people to buy flats in a Bombay suburb, 10 sq ft at a time. But a public issue floated to hawk REPS flopped. Another scheme, floated by Ross Morarka Finance, entitles holders of its real estate participation certificates (Rs 5,000 apiece) to capital appreciation on land or the plot of land itself. But thus far the promoters have been playing it in low key.

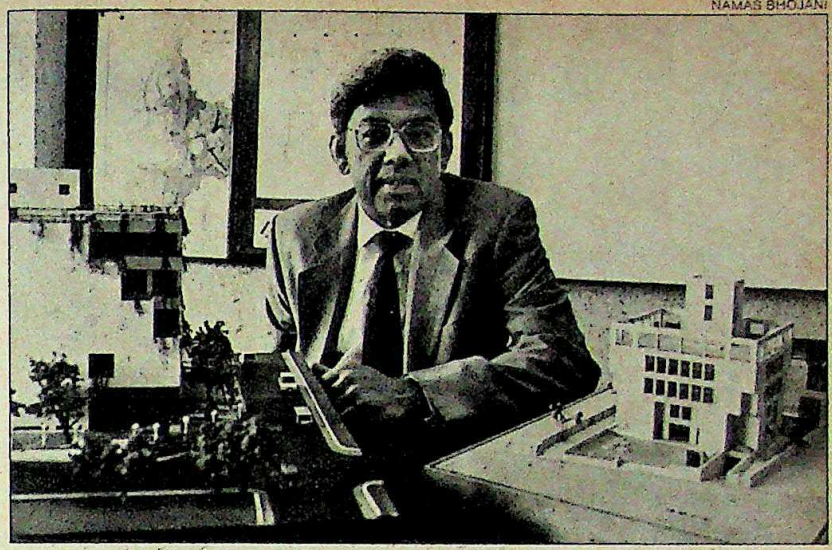
But given the booming market for housing finance—Rs 3,000 crore annually—innovation will continue. Canara Bank, State Bank of India, Vysya Bank and Citibank, the insurance companies, and even private companies have all jumped onto the bandwagon. Morris D'Souza, of Can Fin Homes Ltd, a Canara Bank associate, thinks "there's place for a dozen more housing finance companies".

The more the merrier, since competition is prompting innovation. LIC and GIC are tying their real estate financing programmes to their insurance policies. Citibank has introduced a "pre-approved programme" under which homeowners are told in advance how much they can expect by way of a loan. Fairgrowth Home Finance, a private sector company, is also cobbling together a securitisation plan to bring down funding costs.

In a fast-crowding field, innovation will hold the key to survival.

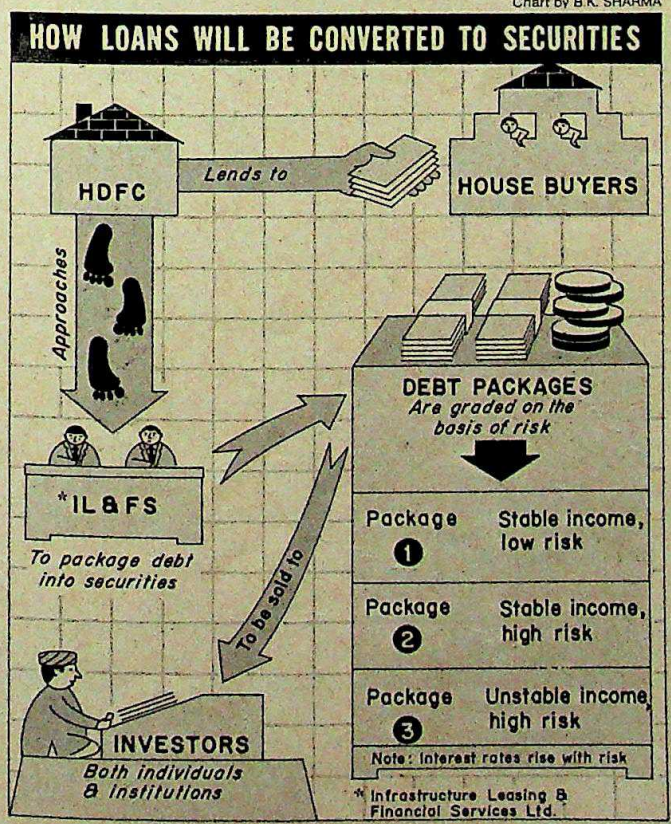
—SHIV TANEJA

NAMAS BHOJANI



Parekh: innovative style

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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SIVASANKARAN

Rich Pastures

Computer success, and more

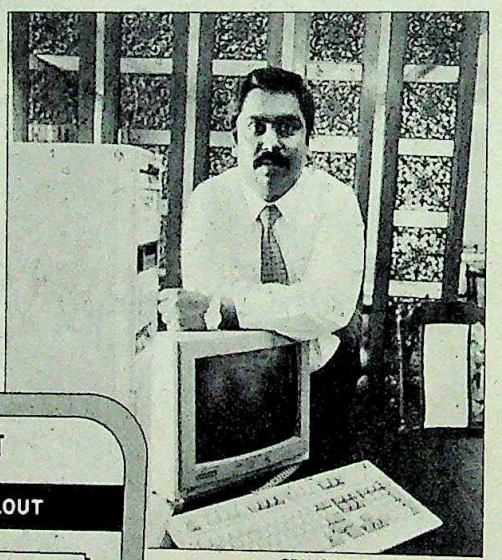
THE phone rings virtually every minute in his hotel suite office in Delhi. This time it's a call from one of his Hong Kong suppliers. And the short, plump, safari-suited man asks the caller to deliver him a whole host of computer components, fixing the price at which he would like to buy.

His table is littered with computer print-outs. Scanning the figures, C. Sivasankaran announces: "I know them by heart." He should. For the print-outs tell him about production schedules and inventory levels in his single main assembly unit, about market trends and opportunities. Whether he is jetting to Delhi or Singapore from his Madras headquarters, Siva, 33, likes to be in touch. His is a one-man show.

So far that's helped rather than hindered. In five short years, Siva's Sterling Computers pole-vaulted from midget to major, from a Rs 1.85-crore turnover in 1985-86 to Rs 60 crore in 1989-90. Clearly, he has come a long way from being a fertiliser factory employee. Setting up a small engineering industry in 1981, he hit the big time when he went into computers in 1984.

In the mid-'80s, it was partly his gambit that cracked open the volume end of the computers market. In an industry that was operating on high margins and low volumes, Sterling's strategy was simple: source components from low-cost foreign suppliers, generate volumes by not only selling cheap but supplying bulk to potential rivals, and avoid high staff overheads by building a huge marketing network. (Staff: just 300 vs Wipro's 1,400 says *C&C* magazine). Amplifies Siva: "Our policy was to sell goods with Japanese quality and American design at Taiwanese prices and Singapore's marketing style. But the intuition was Indian."

Sivasankaran: diversification plans



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

It worked. Due to Siva's price wars, in less than two years, the cost of personal computers (PCs) tumbled from Rs 75,000-100,000 to less than one-third, and the state-owned Electronics Trade & Technology Development Corporation (ET&T) announced a sub-Rs 10,000 PC.

Spurred by success—and growing competition in computers—Siva is now diversifying despite being the PC industry's No. 2, after HCL. His plans include: a Rs 185-crore housing project in Madras for constructing 2,600 apartments; a Rs 120-crore joint sector company with the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation to manufacture high-tech chemicals; investing Rs 45-crore to manufacture tungsten in Cuddalore for the Defence Ministry; a $2,000 'Advantage India' package for foreign tourists.

Still, Siva's touchstone remains high volumes and cut-prices. Says he: "Our objective is to turn the vital needs of society into economically viable businesses whether it's computers, lipstick or real estate." The real goal is to see that half the turnover by 1995 comes from businesses other than computers.

With good reason. The launch of ET&T's 'people's computer' in 1989 not only upstaged Siva, but also squeezed margins by as much as 30 per cent. Sterling no longer has the cut-price advantage with the result that its turnover went up by only 11.41 per cent in 1989-90 compared to a hefty 49 per cent the previous year and a phenomenal 786 per cent two years before.

But Siva thinks he still has an ace up his sleeve: enticing customers with a five-year warranty while the rivals offer just one year's. This is his way to battle both domestic competitors and cheap smuggled goods. Smuggled PCs have a perennial spares problem and local PCs come with hefty maintenance contracts, he reasons.

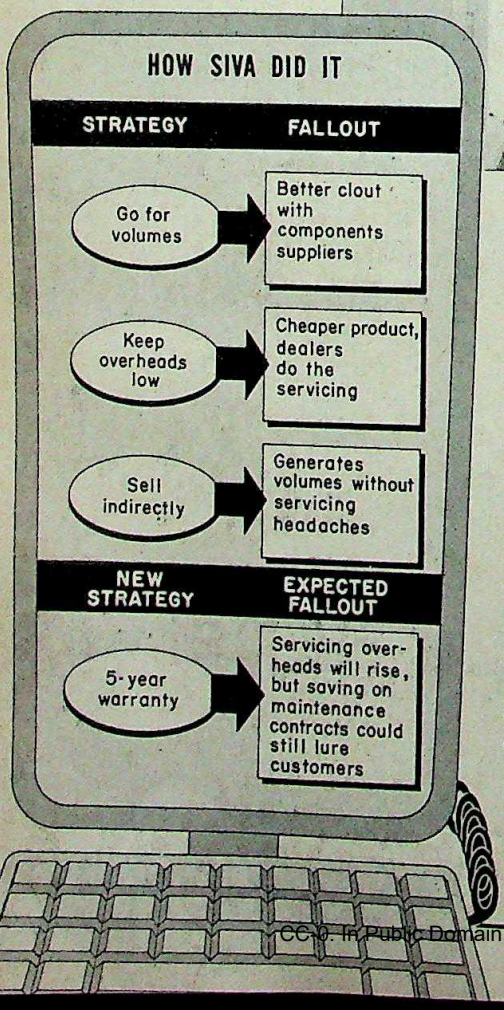
But will the warranty gamble pay off? Says a Sterling dealer: "I think it will give us more business." But, alleges a major competitor: "He lacks the infrastructure to provide a five-year maintenance contract."

There are doubts about his managerial infrastructure as well. Says one Siva-watcher: "He has neither professionalised his company, nor decentralised. His diversification spree might affect his computer business."

But Siva is unperturbed. He is already building a service team to execute the warranty scheme. Besides, he says, the idea is to buy components of very high quality so that they don't need much repair. But just in case they do and customers aren't too happy, the diversification should help.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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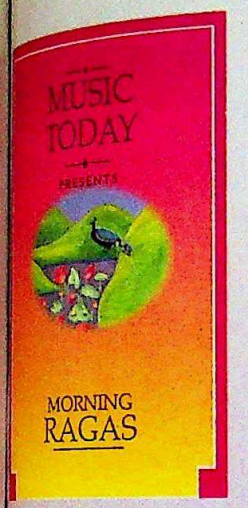

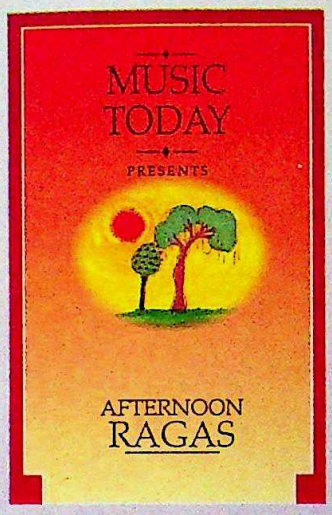

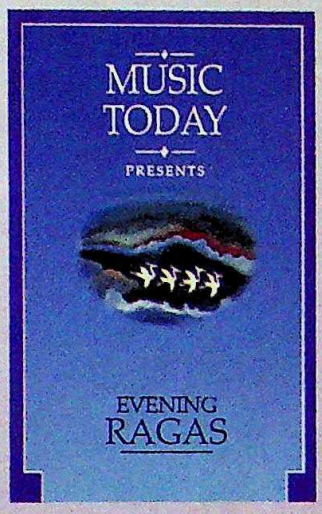

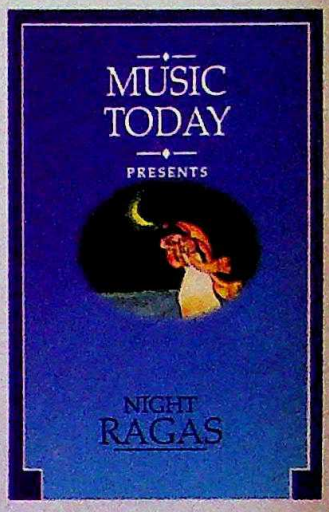

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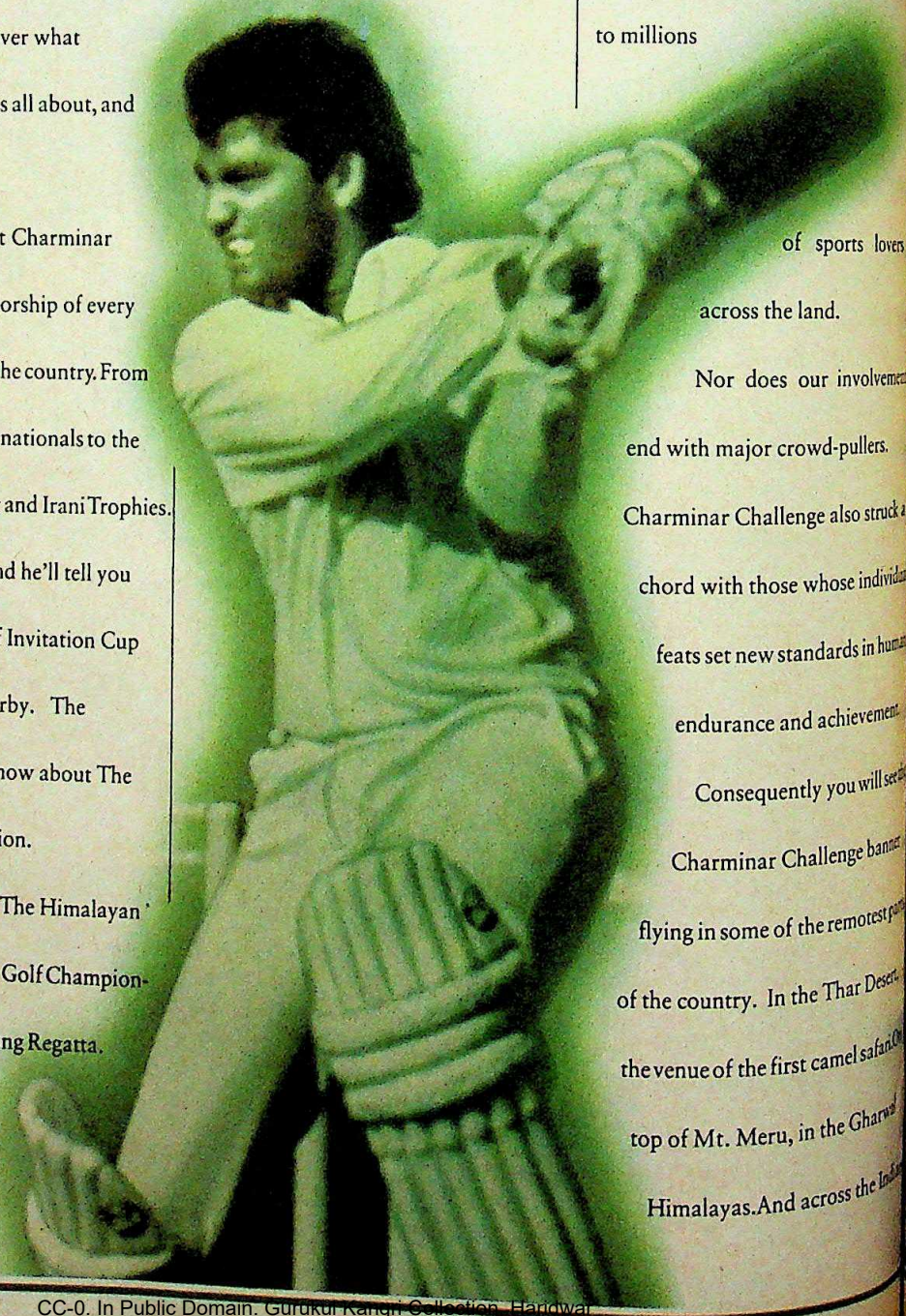

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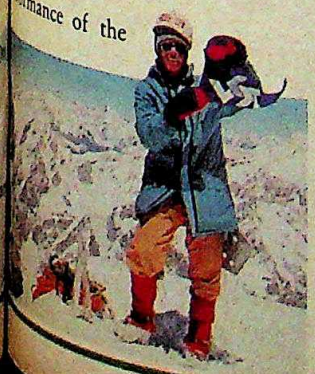

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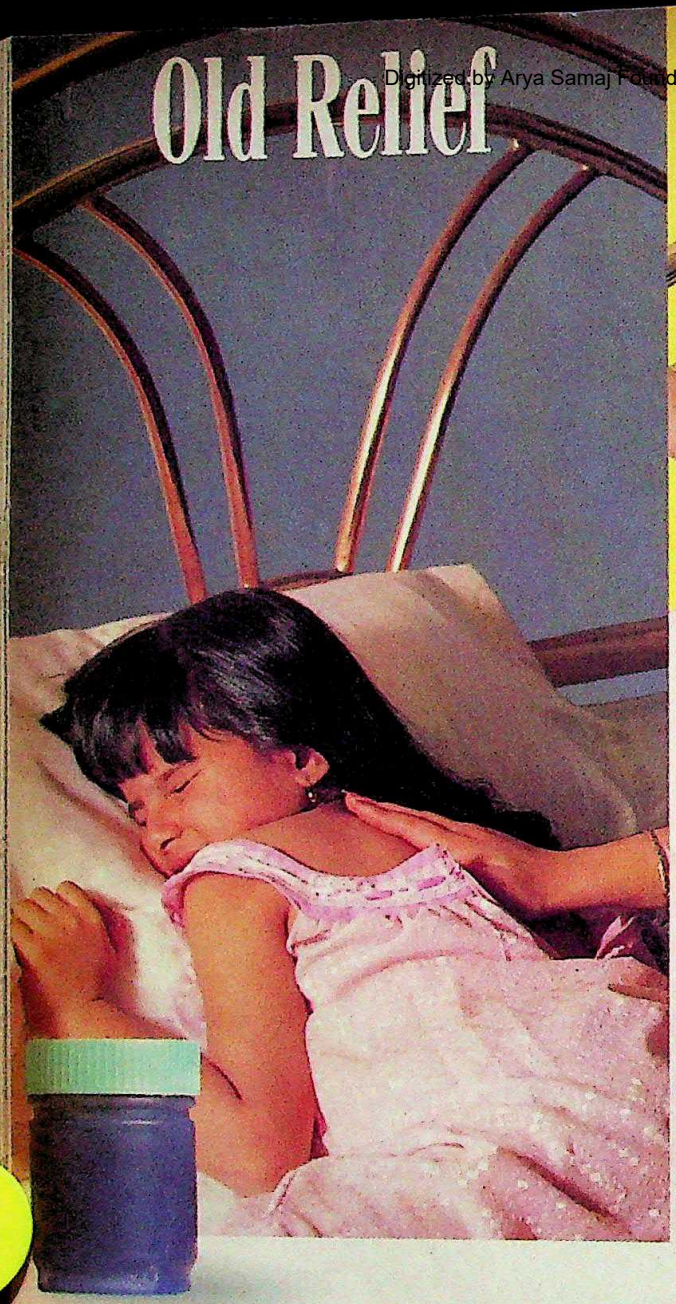
Old Relief

Cold Relief



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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

The Bidding Racket

Bihar minister exposes contractor-gangster nexus

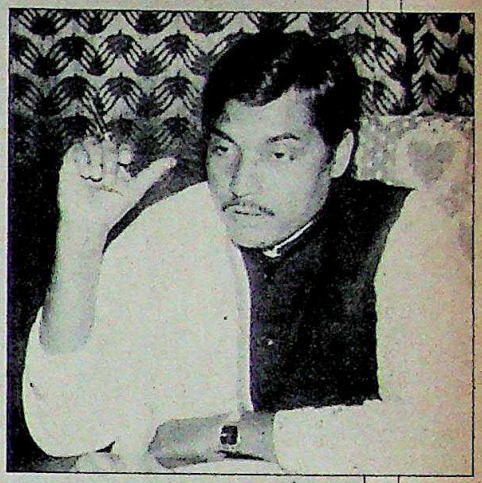
IT was the cacophony beyond his door that alerted Gajendra Prasad Singh. "Hold this for one more day please," he overheard one voice pleading. "Don't worry, our men will take care of everything," reassured another. "Please keep this for *nashta* (breakfast) and *paan*," said yet another voice above the general din. "What is going on?" asked Singh, Bihar's new minister of state for Information and Public Relations Department (I&PR). Just some contractors discussing the release of tender notices in newspapers, he was told.

The truth dawned on Singh a day later: he was unwittingly presiding over Operation Tender Loot. Leafing through the 'Tender Notices' sections of local newspapers, he discovered that by simply manipulating the dates of their insertions, multi-crore civil works contracts could be bagged easily. Reason: if you give rival bidders just one or two days to send in their quotes, they may not respond at all. But with prior knowledge about the tender being floated, your own bid is ready and waiting to be declared winner. In a random sampling of 30 'Tender Notices', Singh found that a few required bids to be sent in the same day and some did not even indicate a date. Invariably, the notices appeared in late city newspaper editions, distributed only in the state capital.

Singh's tentative calculations suggest that over the last five years something like Rs 300 crore could have been skimmed off by contractors in non-competitive bidding for projects ranging from road, bridge and building construction to canal and irrigation works. "This scandal is bigger than Bofors," he told INDIA TODAY. "By suppressing the tender notices, the I&PR Department allows unscrupulous contractors to escalate the cost by 20 to 30 per cent and the engineers of the departments concerned oblige their favourites with contracts."

Clearly, the system is stupid. For, the 1981 government order under which all works-related contracts have to be routed through the I&PR Department was intended to inject competition and fair play into the process. But this centralisation worked the other way. The state's all-powerful contractor lobby nobbled the key officials by blandishments or intimidation and subverted the system.

Thus while the Bihar Government has been spending money on purportedly public projects, there's little emerging as public benefit. The North Koel irrigation project, for example, has swallowed up Rs 450 crore over a decade but not a drop of water has made it to the drought-prone regions of south and central Bihar for want of a connecting canal from the Kutku Dam. This is when the works division claims that their portion of the canal had been completed. The fact is, the canals were not aligned properly. Thus much of the money spent went to line not the canals but contractors' pockets.



"Contractors have robbed the state of Rs 300 crore in five years."

GAJENDRA PRASAD SINGH
minister of state for I&PR

One way to lay your hands on public money is to grab projects with overblown specifications, so that they cost more. According to Jagdanand Singh, minister for water resources development, the Durgawati reservoir project in south-central Bihar should have had a spillway with a capacity of handling 50,000 cusecs of water. But the actual designs were for a capacity five times as much, and the contract was clinched at Rs 34 crore by Pancham Singh, a powerful Ranchi-based contractor. Jagdanand cancelled the contract and reduced the estimated cost to Rs 19 crore.

According to Janaki Sharan Prasad, former general secretary of the Bihar Engineering Service Association (BESA), the award of tenders depends more on local *dadas* (thugs) and only in rare cases does an outside contractor get a look-in. Scores of mercenary gangs operate in the state only to

OPERATION TENDER LOOT

How to win projects and pocket money

STEP ONE Build links with key officials in departments that have projects to be executed so as to obtain advance information on forthcoming tenders.

STEP TWO Once the tenders reach the Information and Public Relations Department, get officials to withhold publication till the last possible date.

STEP THREE Get tenders published in newspapers with the least possible circulation or late city editions that reach only the capital's readers.

STEP FOUR To restrict circulation even further, buy up as many of the available copies of issues in which the tender advertisement has appeared.

STEP FIVE When the official tender papers (called Bills of Quantity) are published, buy them up as well. Use local goondas to see that no one else can do so.

STEP SIX Quote rates at least 10-15 per cent higher than approved levels, so when the tender is opened and there's little competition, money can be skimmed off.

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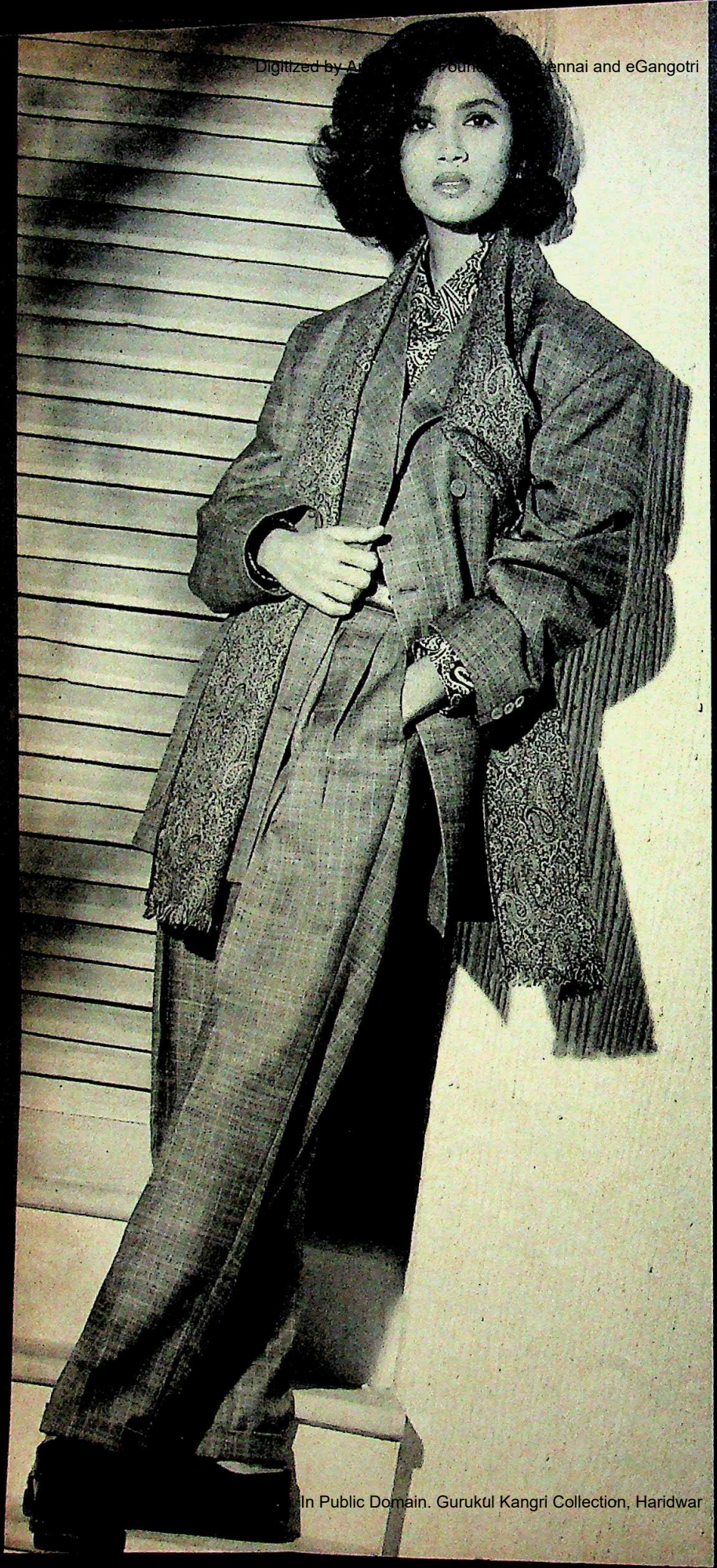

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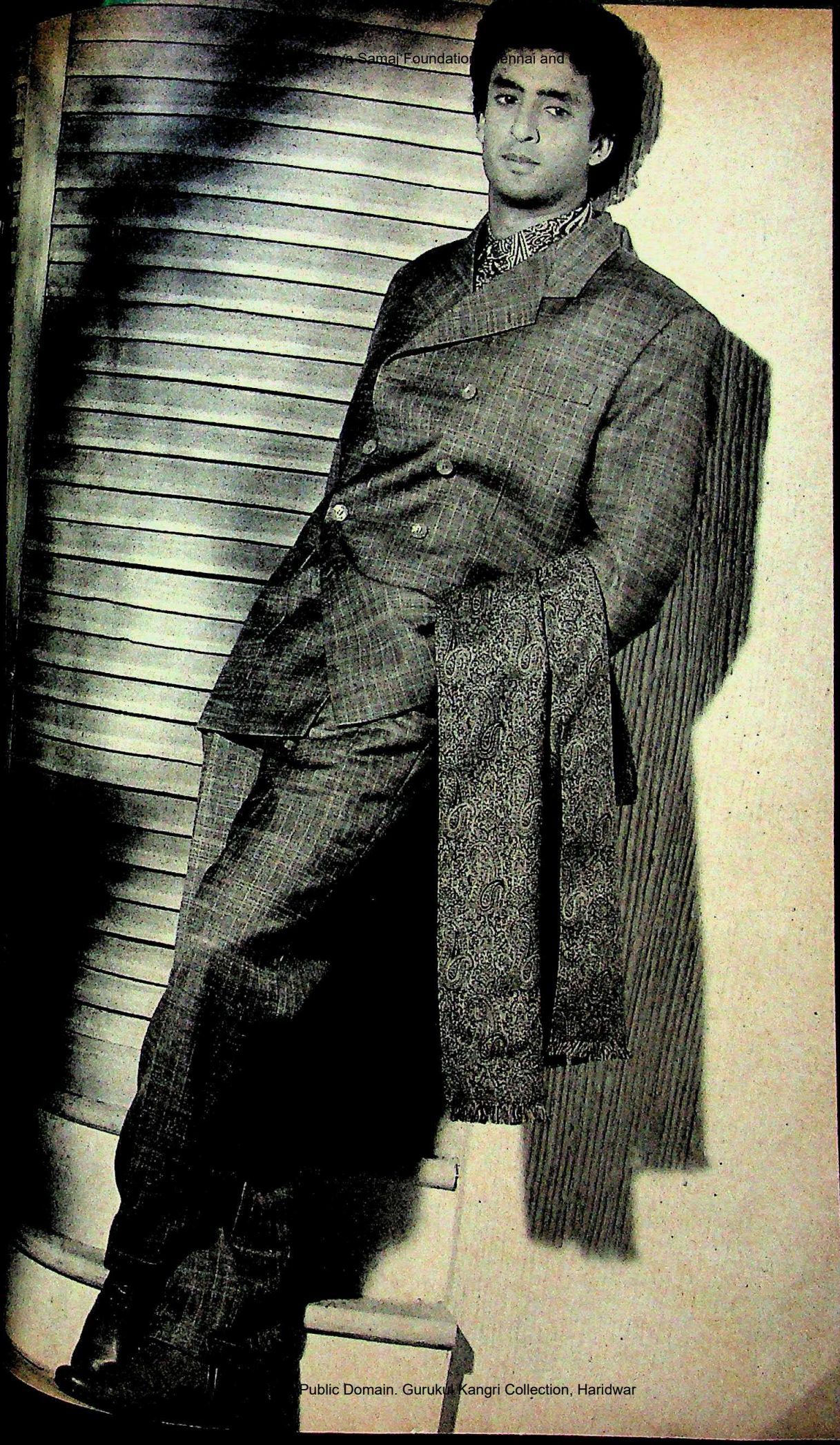

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loot tender papers and to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of potential rival bidders. On December 27, 1990, there were clashes for a PWD contract in Muzaffarpur.

Violence and mayhem are not just confined to the tendering process. At the next stage, contractors try to get the state to fork out money even for work not done, with supervising engineers and accountants being the targets of intimidation. BESA General Secretary Ravindra Kumar Sinha says that in the past five years 26 assistant and executive engineers were liquidated and nine assaulted by criminals just because they resisted passing bogus bills or failed to oblige the contractors in other ways. "If you resist the contractor-criminal pressure you don't have a chance to live, and if you succumb you face government action," rues Sinha.

Some corrective action is underway to wrest the contract system away from the clutches of crooks. For example, tender participants will henceforth have their antecedents verified by the police. Besides, the Government has decreed that tenders have to be filed in triplicate—one at the secretariat, another at the superintending engineer level, and a third at the executive engineer level—to bring in greater checks and balances. "We are here to change the system and break the criminal-contractor-politician nexus," declares Jai Prakash Narain Yadav, minister of state for water resources. Mohammad Illyas Hussain, minister for roads construction, says he has already initiated steps to get those districts declared as 'sensitive' where tender-loot had been common. A list is being prepared to identify the criminal elements among the contractors so that they could be weeded out.

But Bharat Prasad Singh, a contractor-turned-politician and ex-Congress(I) MLA wonders aloud whether good intentions alone will work. For new rules will be only as good as the people implementing them, he says and adds: "When tender notices are not published properly and people can't obtain tender papers, what can be done (to curb the loot)?" Shyam Sunder Singh Dhiraj, former Youth Congress(I) president and ex-contractor estimates that 90 per cent of the tenders worth more than Rs 20 lakh are cornered by gangsters anyway. The tender system, it seems, will continue to draw the not-so-tender notices of gangsters and thugs.

—FARZAND AHMED

RURAL WINDOW BY MURAD ALI BAIG

The Diesel Crunch

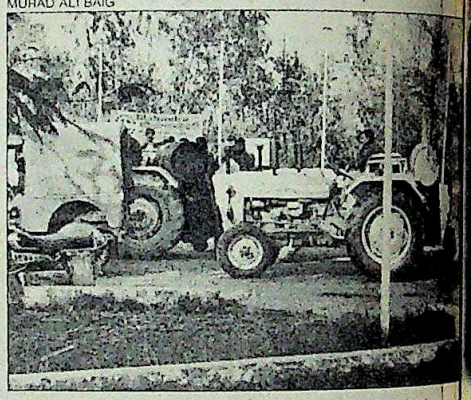
THE river Yamuna bursts through the Shivalik Hills between Rampurmandi in Uttar Pradesh, Paonta in Himachal Pradesh and Batamandi in Haryana. Most locals believe that the river used to be the legendary Saraswati that once thundered through Rajasthan to the Arabian Sea, until excessive silting forced it eastwards to join the Ganges. A large complex of dams and powerhouses restrict its waters today.

The farmers in these areas are surprisingly aware of the recent events in the Gulf and there is admiration for Saddam Hussain, a 'sher' (tiger) who dared to defy over 20 countries. The multinational attack on Iraq has, however, hit them hard with a sudden shortage of diesel and kerosene.

Sukhbir Rogh in Haryana said: "We are getting enough power now to irrigate our fields but there is always a shortage in the month before harvest when everyone needs water. Then we couple up our pumpsets to diesel engines and sometimes small pumps are attached to tractors. It is expensive, but when our crops are dying no cost is too much. Only diesel can ensure farm operations during the crucial ploughing and pre-harvest periods. Today we need diesel mainly to transport cane to the sugar mills but we must try and store as much of it as we can in case this shortage continues. Already we have to wait for days at petrol pumps to get diesel and if we buy it from agents, they not only charge much more but also adulterate it with kerosene and lubricating oil."

Said Rahimuddin in Uttar Pradesh bitterly: "It is difficult for poor farmers like us to even fill our stomachs. Everything is expensive. Our fertiliser now costs Rs 10 more per bag. We will still buy them even if the prices further increase. We are not even sure of getting the crop prices announced by the Government. Further the officials at the octroi post and the grain *mandis* also harass us. The more the administrative paraphernalia, the more the 'sarakari babus' (government officials) to harass us. The political 'netas' make a fool of everyone with promises, the money they spend on project finally helps in filling their own pockets. This poor area has gained nothing from all these 'yojnas' and other schemes. Farmers have a hard life."

MURAD ALI BAIG



Farmers queue up for diesel

About 30 per cent of diesel is used for agriculture. The district administrations have tried to regulate their distribution by rationing 50 litres for tractors and 20 litres for pumpsets. Supplies to petty dealers have been restricted and in some districts pumps have been segregated for trucks and tractors. While the farmers complain that the supplies are insufficient, the officials believe that there is hoarding. Ansar Hussain, a tractor owner, complained that though he needed 50 litres a day for cane transportation, he was only getting this amount once in four days. So, supply of cane to the sugar mills was being badly affected.

To add to their woes, supporters of Mahendra Singh Tikait and other politicians are aggravating feelings and making life even more difficult.

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WHERE PEOPLE COME TO DISCOVER A PAST BUT END UP WITH A FUTURE...AT LAST.

RALPH SCHMIDT, A 31 YEAR OLD NUCLEAR SCIENTIST FROM GERMANY DECIDED TO TAKE, WHAT HE THOUGHT WOULD BE A SIMPLE 3 MONTH VACATION IN INDIA. IT'S BEEN 3 YEARS SINCE. HE SAYS "ALL WAS WELL UNTIL I TOUCHED U.P. THEN I REALISED THAT THINGS COULD GET BETTER. THE HISTORY WAS NEVER-ENDING. THE LEGENDS UNLIMITED. FOR INSTANCE THE GHATS AT VARANASI NEVER FAIL TO FASCINATE ME. JUST LIKE THE TALES OF THE RANI OF JHANSI, THE FAINT ECHOES OF STRIKING SWORDS AT KALINJAR IN BUNDELKHAND, THE TRIVENI (THE CONFLUENCE OF THREE RIVERS) AT ALLAHABAD AND THE CULTURE AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE NAWABS OF AVADH AT LUCKNOW. THE TAJ MAHAL AND MUGHAL SPLENDOUR AT AGRA AND FATEHPUR SIKRI. AND THE ROUTE TO NIRVANA AT SARNATH. AMONG SO. SO MANY OTHERS. BEING A SCIENTIST I'D ALWAYS WANTED TO DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW IN LIFE. IN U.P. I DID. AND I CALL IT PEACE OF MIND. FOREVER IN THE FUTURE"

U.P. TOURISM

...NAL KISHORE ROAD LUCKNOW (U.P.) PH. : 246205

ADVANCE RESERVATION CENTRE ARC

CHANDRALOK BUILDING, 36 JANPATH, NEW DELHI. PH. : 3322251

HOLIDAY WONDERLAND UTTAR PRADESH

...ER, AHMEDABAD PH. : 464318, BOMBAY PH. : 215458, CALCUTTA PH. : 207855, CHANDIGARH PH. : 46418, MADRAS PH. : 479728, NEW DELHI PH. : 3322251, BOMBAY ARC PH. : 215497.

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THE MARKETS

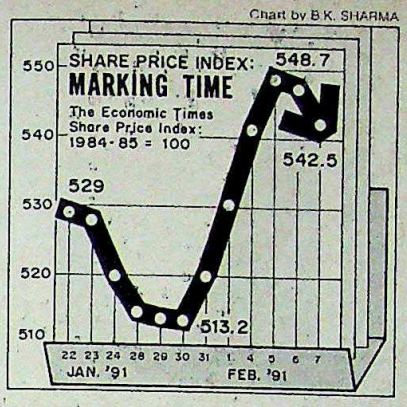
Steady Slump

Scrips face downwards slide

AFTER a smart rally of about a 100 points which took the Bombay Stock Exchange's (BSE) 30-share Sensitive Index above the 1,000-mark, the index has begun to head south once again. Reflecting this downward movement, *The Economic Times* all-India index of shares moved lower to 542.5 on February 7. The underlying sentiment, despite the brief rally, continues to be very unsteady; and brokers and market-watchers say that weak bull operators have started liquidating their outstanding positions soon after rumours of sales by a leading mutual fund wafted in.

This fund is understood to have effected sales on a number of speculative counters, including Reliance, ACC and Tata Steel. Other mutual funds and financial institutions are also reported to be booking profits in some scrips, especially in the forward list. On the other hand, the rock steady quotes of most of the cash scrips are also being attributed to the same institutions, who are constantly shopping for good "bargains". Says a leading financial and stock-market analyst: "There are, at this point of time, a number of good scrips, particularly in the cash section, that can be picked up for a song." But the only thing is you have to know where to look.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Though the Bombay market reopened last fortnight after a crisis-ridden period, from all accounts it appears that things are going to be a lot messier in the weeks to come. With five brokers squarely being declared as defaulters, and at least nine more put on what the exchange authorities call its "protected list", speculation abounds as to how many more will actually go under. One indication is the BSE index. According to one broker there is a strong linkage between the movement of the index and the number of brokers that are likely to be affected. Says he: "For every 100-point drop in the index, you can be sure there will be some brokers who will be in serious trouble."

In other news around the markets, Canbank Mutual Fund and SBI Mutual Fund have announced plans for implementing equity-linked savings schemes offering 100 per cent tax exemption up to Rs 10,000 under Section 80CCB of the Income Tax Act. This announcement comes close on the heels of the one made by the Unit Trust of India (UTI) for its own scheme. Called Master Plan, UTI will open subscription for this fund, which will primarily invest its monies in growth-oriented equities, between February 15 and the end of March. The other two funds are also likely to open their subscriptions shortly. How much money these schemes will be able to mobilise, and how well they will do in these uncertain times, is a matter of considerable interest. The next few weeks should provide the answers.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1991 HIGH	1991 LOW	CLOSE 22.1.91	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	136.00	109.00	123.00	13.00 –
Associated Cement	1650.00	1300.00	1530.00	45.00 +
Asian Paints	250.00	215.00	245.00	17.50 +
Atlas Copco	46.00	42.00	44.50	0.50 +
Bajaj Auto	600.00	500.00	560.00	20.00 –
Baroda Rayon	490.00	400.00	467.50	17.50 +
Bathargur	257.00	228.00	257.00	10.00 +
Birla Jute	185.00	168.00	183.00	4.00 +
Bilow Plast	75.00	40.00	62.50	2.50* +
Bombay Dyeing	185.00	150.00	180.00	20.00 +
Britannia Ind.	121.00	112.00	120.00	3.00 +
Brooke Bond	132.00	116.00	131.00	5.00 +
Cadbury	152.00	132.50	150.00	8.75 +
Century Textiles	3925.00	3625.00	3825.00	50.00 +
Colgate Palmolive	292.50	250.00	281.25	16.25 +
Cyanamid	98.75	76.25	97.50	12.50 +
DCM	170.00	123.00	158.50	3.50 +
Dunlop	53.00	49.50	52.00	nil
E.I. Hotels	50.00	42.50	50.00	nil
Escorts	148.00	127.00	140.00	5.00 –
Finolex Cables	210.00	140.00	192.50	7.50 +
Garware Nylon	40.00	32.00	34.00	4.00 –
G.E. Shipping	30.00	25.00	27.50	0.50 –
G.S.F.C.	210.00	150.00	163.75	1.25 –
Gemain Ind.	193.75	170.00	185.00	nil
Guj. Ambuja Cement	116.25	90.00	107.50	0.25 +
Hind. Aluminium	265.00	200.00	250.00	21.25 +
Hind. Cibai	775.00	650.00	730.00	30.00*
Hindustan Lever	148.75	140.00	147.00	2.00 +
Hindustan Motors	23.50	19.00	20.75	1.25 –
Hoechst	2950.00	2500.00	2850.00	150.00 +
Indian Organic	38.00	30.00	36.25	1.25 –
Indian Rayon	130.00	110.00	122.50	nil
Ingersoll-Rand	305.00	240.00	300.00	25.00 +
ITC	116.00	99.00	107.00	2.00 –
J.K. Synthetics	37.50	27.00	33.50	2.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	170.00	150.00	162.50	5.00 –
Kirloskar Cummins	112.50	95.00	110.00	2.50 +
KSB Pumps	190.00	160.00	185.00	15.00* +
Larsen & Toubro	113.75	90.00	105.00	5.00 +
Lipton	72.50	57.50	72.50	3.50 +
LML Ltd.	37.00	29.50	31.00	4.00 –
LMW	3075.00	2380.00	3050.00	325.00 +
Madura Coats	210.00	193.00	206.00	1.00 +
M&M	75.00	60.00	67.50	nil
Mastershares	26.50	20.00	24.25	1.75 +
Motor Industries	780.00	675.00	750.00	30.00 +
Mukand Ltd.	177.50	155.00	171.25	3.75 +
National Organic	1075.00	925.00	1015.00	40.00 +
Nestle India	130.00	111.25	127.50	4.50 +
Nirlon	20.00	16.25	19.00	0.50 –
Orkay Silk Mills	25.00	17.50	23.50	2.00 +
Peico Electronics	60.00	53.00	57.25	1.25 +
Premier Auto	50.00	30.00	37.00	2.00 –
Raymond	131.25	110.00	121.25	5.00 –
Reckitt & Colman	220.00	205.00	217.00	1.00 +
Reliance Industries	125.00	91.25	113.75	5.75 +
Siemens India	125.00	112.50	117.50	5.00 –
Shaw Wallace	93.00	77.00	91.00	3.00 +
Shriram Fibres	38.50	33.00	37.50	2.50 +
SKF Bearings	2000.00	1650.00	2000.00	100.00 +
SPIC	42.00	33.00	41.00	nil
Tata Steel	160.00	130.00	150.00	3.75 +
Telco	182.50	158.75	162.50	7.50 –
Titan Watches	82.00	58.00	75.00	10.00 +
Vam Organic	120.00	102.50	120.00	8.75 +
Videocon Int.	260.00	180.00	250.00	15.00** +
Voltas	106.25	92.50	102.50	2.50 +
Wimco	21.25	16.00	20.00	nil

* Ex-dividend ** Ex-right

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	14.5764	14.4504
Austria	Shilling	1	1.8255	1.8004
Bahrain	Dinar	1	38.75	38.25
Bangladesh	Taka	100	53.6326	53.5010
Canada	Dollar	1	16.1611	16.0044
Denmark	Kroner	1	3.3365	3.3026
Egypt	Pound	1	5.20	5.15
France	Franc	1	3.8314	3.7383
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.4003	2.3777
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.0982	0.0890
Iran	Rial	100	N/A	N/A
Italy	Lira	100	1.7093	1.6904
Japan	Yen	100	14.7059	14.3472
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.40	0.35
Kuwait	Dinar	1	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.9577	6.8652
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.10	1.00
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6220	0.5890
Netherlands	Guilder	1	11.3924	11.2799
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.78	0.75
Singapore	Dollar	1	10.9556	10.8509
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1900	0.1800
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4656	0.4228
Sweden	Kroner	1	3.4244	3.3895
Switzerland	Franc	1	15.0464	14.8950
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1039	0.0990
Thailand	Baht	100	74.6608	74.4228
UK	Pound	1	37.2509	36.9754
USA	Dollar	1	18.7178	18.5443
UAE	Dirham	1	4.2526	4.1518
USSR	Rouble	1	25.6068	25.4580

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 7.2.91.

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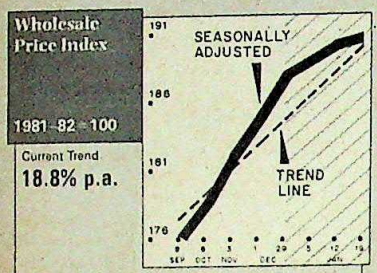
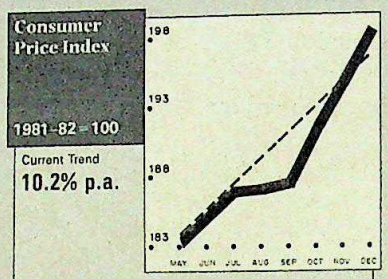
The two major crises confronting the economy are inflation and foreign trade. Inflation is in double digits and credible policies are needed to contain inflationary expectations. On the other hand, with the trend rate of import growth outstripping exports, the trade gap may widen.

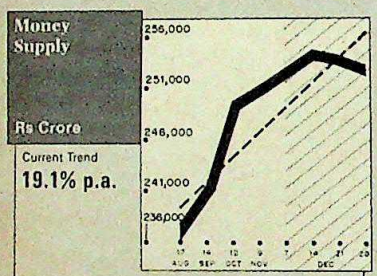
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



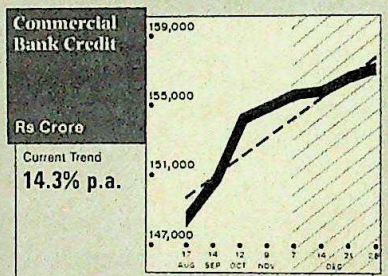
Wholesale prices continue to spiral—the current trend rate of growth of almost 20 per cent looks ominous.



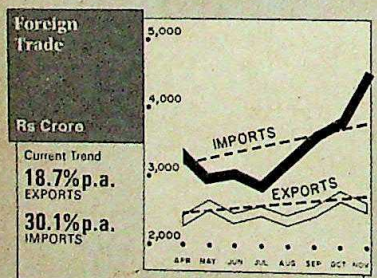
Consumer prices rise in 1990, the economy experienced double digit inflation of about 14 per cent.



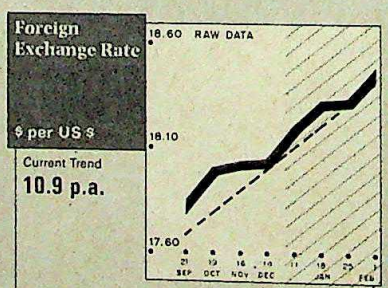
Money supply registered a marginal contraction. If sustained, this will help combat inflation.



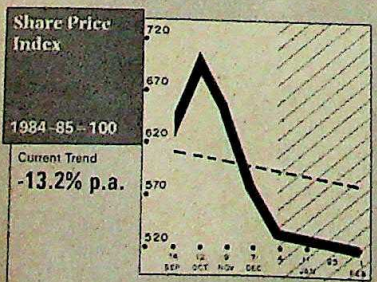
Commercial bank credit grew last fortnight. However, industry continues to stagnate.



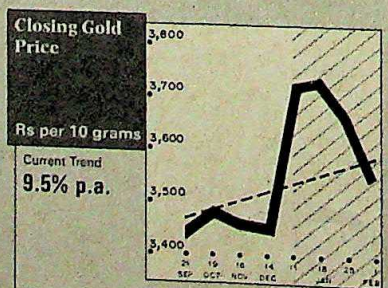
Exports fell while imports rose significantly, intensifying the foreign exchange crunch.



The rupee depreciated against the dollar but, exports are not responding adequately.



Share prices declined further. The current trend rate of growth has now become negative.



The prices of the yellow metal fell after the sharp increase of the previous month. The trend line is still rising.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of January 1991

	% Growth
Onions	25.17
Solvent Extracted Oil	9.83
Rape & Mustard Seeds	8.48
Groundnut Oil	8.07
Jute Textiles	7.44
Linseed	6.96
Masoor	6.68
Mustard Oil	5.62
Linseed Oil	5.49
Coconut Oil	5.28
Pipes & Tubes	4.86
Gur	4.29
Chillies	4.28
Diesel Engines	3.80
Eggs	3.65
Copra	3.55
Power-Driven Pumps	3.55
Bajra	3.44
Tobacco Raw	3.20
Zinc	3.15
Barley	3.00
Betel-Nuts	2.92
Sugarcane	2.77
Jute Textile Machinery	2.59
Mustard Oilcake	2.50
Wheat	2.39
Electrical Motors	2.23
Milk	2.18
Mining Machinery	1.98
Khandsari	1.88
Sugar	1.69
Dry Cells	1.60
Rice	1.51
Cables & Wires	1.47
Machine Tools	1.47
Gram	1.44
Boilers	1.44
Groundnut Oilcake	1.37
Radio & T.V.	1.33
Atta	1.12
Utensils	1.06
Tapioca	1.00
Maida	0.98
Tyres	0.96
Bars & Rods	0.95
Pig Iron	0.95
Jowar	0.93

Of the 134 items considered, 92 of them with a total weight of 60.825 had a positive rate of growth and 42 of them with a total weight of 24.027 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1990	1989
Petroleum Crude Thousand Tonnes, December	2890	2910
Petroleum Refinery output Thousand Tonnes, December	4166	4334
Letters of Intent Numbers, December	825	1182
Industrial Licences Numbers, December	387	41[illegible]
Call Money Rate Per cent, December	1098.25	1315.[illegible]

Compiled by THE POLICY GR[illegible]

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Because without the right battery your Maruti is as good as dead.

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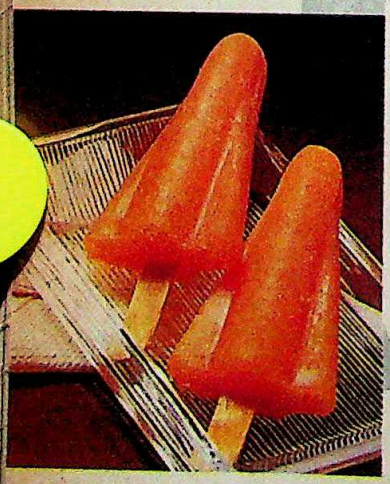

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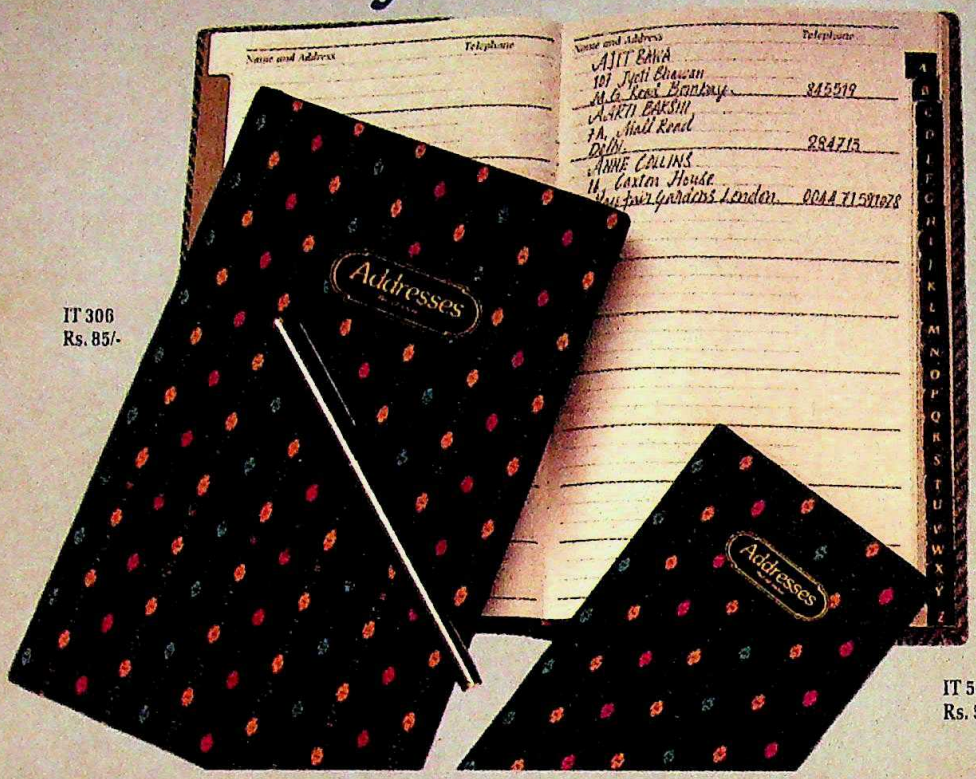

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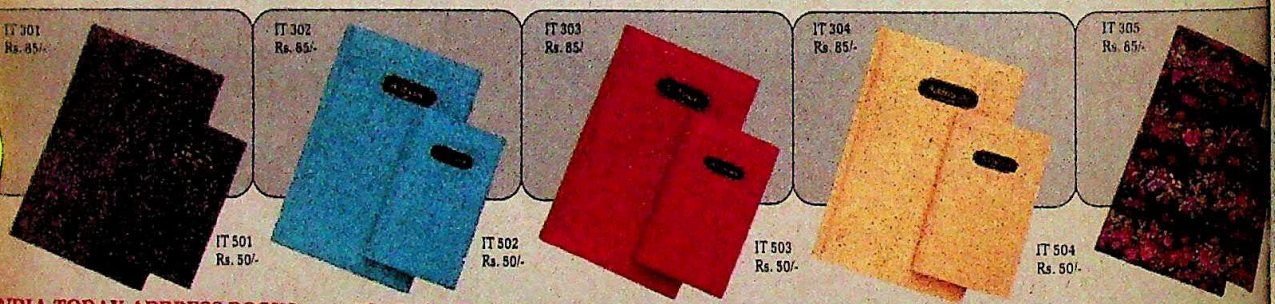

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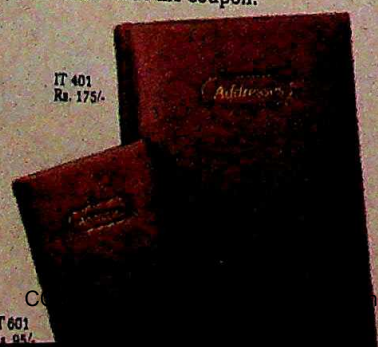

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The Poor Reporter

NOW that a few newspapers and a lone magazine—INDIA TODAY—are daring to report major international events first-hand, how and where do we stand? As my two colleagues, Ramesh Chandran of *The Times of India* and Saeed Naqvi of World Report, and I discovered during our days in Baghdad, we were seeking to report the momentous events hobbled by our total lack of flexibility in how or where to spend money.

Our first shock was to discover that our international telex cards were not accepted at the lone unofficial telex channel operating out of Al-Rasheed hotel. Payment had to be made in dollars in cash or through American Express credit cards.

As the first American-led bombing raids started and the Gulf war was on, travellers' cheques accepted by the first hotel we stayed in—Al-Mansour—were not accepted at Al-Rasheed. The Reserve Bank of India permits the taking out of only $100 in cash; the rest of the allowance has to be in travellers' cheques.

Half our time was spent in trying to get our reports out each day and to figure out how we could pay our hotel bills. After the war started, journalists left the Al-Mansour and other hotels either for the Jordan border or for the Al-Rasheed hotel. Al-Mansour was simply not considered safe because it stood a stone's throw from the Information Ministry and the television studios. Chandran and I moved into Al-Rasheed to spend another three nights in the bomb shelter. What remained of the international press was in Al-Rasheed, and even the Information Ministry's liaison officers moved into the hotel.

Telegraph and telephone communications had been cut after the first day's bombing raids. There was almost no way to send out reports; the tiny opportunity was the satellite channels set up by the Cable News Network (CNN) and the BBC. The television channels permitting, one could hire a few minutes of telephone time at an exorbitant cost—up to $500 each time—provided there was an arrangement at the Indian end to take down reports at breakneck speed.

Censorship was clamped down. A censor cleared copy before one could read it over the satellite telephone. The dish was set up in the garden of the Al-Rasheed, weather permitting.

On January 19, Chandran and I, together with the rest of the world press, were ordered out by the Iraqi authorities, the sole exception was the CNN reporter. And for two days we underwent the ordeal of trying to find a taxi we could afford to pay. The going rate for a taxi ride up to the Jordan border—a mere four or five hours' drive—was between $3,000 and $5,000. In the end, we left Baghdad on the morning of January 20, courtesy CBS News. The arrangement was that CBS would accept deferred payment from us, but at the end of the journey and a $700-second taxi ride later, CBS chose to underwrite the trip.

A war situation demands a great measure of flexibility in paying for sending reports and for wildly fluctuating living, food and transportation costs. As I saw for myself during a week's stay in Baghdad, the authorities wrote new rules each day, with dollars in cash being the only universally accepted currency.

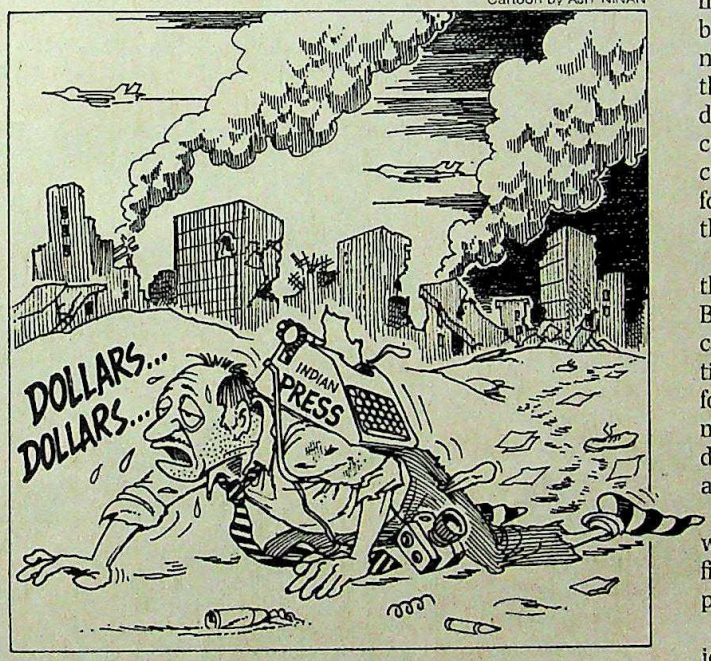
Hotels charged the totally unrealistic and absurd rate of 32.60 Iraqi dinars for $100 when the black market rate was anything between three to five dinars for one dollar. With the onset of the war, Iraqi dinars became scarce, except at official exchange counters as those pining for dollars sought to hedge their bets by buying gold.

In situations such as those I discovered in Baghdad, Indian bureaucratic rules and restrictions on how to take out foreign exchange do not make sense. Further, they discourage newspapers and magazines from sending out their men (and women) to view events first-hand from the Indian perspective.

The bane of Indian journalism has been the pitiful amount of money newspapers and magazines traditionally spend on the most important job of news gathering. This has been particularly true about reporting major international events. Now that this trend is beginning to change—not a day too soon—the Indian print medium is discovering that persons they send out must spend much of their time making their money stretch because there is simply not enough of it.

It is time the Indian Government and the Reserve Bank gave some thought to a system of authorising the use of international credit cards to give journalists on professional visits abroad the freedom to concentrate on work. Selected exporters have this facility. Why not the press?

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Indian journalists in Baghdad were handicapped by their pitiful allowance and the inflated costs of living and reporting.

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SUICIDE

Fatal Attraction

As the suicide rate grows, psychiatrists working with the unhappy and disturbed blame the stresses of a society in transition.

By RAMESH MENON and AMRIT DHILLON

THE moment her exam results came out, Sujata, a Bombay schoolgirl, became introspective and withdrew into a shell. Her poor marks meant that she stood no hope of ever getting into medical college. A psychiatrist recommended electric shock treatment. Horrified at the idea, Sujata's father decided to counsel her himself. As she responded, her family began to breathe more easily. But one day Sujata handed around over two dozen free cinema tickets to her family and relatives. She asked them to go ahead and reach the cinema. She would catch up with them later, she promised. Having ensured she was alone in the house, Sujata doused herself with kerosene and set fire to herself. She was only 16.

Although no up-to-date figures have been collected on the number of youngsters who kill themselves every year, psychiatrists are alarmed at the unmistakable trend. In 1986, 7,545 persons below the age of 18 killed themselves—13.9 per cent of the total for that year. It's all part of the rising tide of suicides throughout the country as people struggle to cope with the endless pressures of modern existence.

Schoolchildren can find the rat race of exam results and competition too much to bear. They know the chances of happiness and prosperity are doomed without good marks. The pressure starts so early that the police come across cases of children as young as 10 or 11 committing suicide. Suicide is one of life's great enigmas. No one can say with certainty what "type" of person will do it, how, when or why. The friends and family of a suicide case are invariably surprised when it happens. A shroud of mystery surrounds the act. The only certitude is in the figures. Every two minutes someone in India attempts suicide. Every 10 minutes someone succeeds.

Sujata was just one of the 60,000 people who killed themselves last year. Nearly half of them were aged between 18 and 35, generally considered the best years of a person's life. The real figure, though, is much higher because many families prefer to pass off a suicide as an accident to avoid the stigma it carries.

Psychiatrists say they're confronted by a colossal challenge. While the number of suicides is shooting up, the country has only 200 psychiatrists to cope with it. Five years ago, K.E.M. Hospital in Bombay used to receive around 10 cases of suicide attempts a week. Now it's over 25. Other hospitals have noted a similar rise. Behind the cold figures lies the endless variety of human misery. The reason why a person chooses to end his or her life can be enumerated *ad infinitum*: poverty, unemployment, a miserable marriage, debt, incurable disease, dowry harassment, alcoholism, depression or broken love affairs.

Over 2,500 adolescents killed themselves over unhappy love affairs last year. Others suffer agonies over their attractiveness to the opposite sex. A suicide prevention centre in Bombay dealt with a young man obsessed with his poorly developed genitals. His doctor's attempts at reassurance failed. He killed himself.

Illustrations by PRANAB DUTTA

The rat race nowadays starts in the classroom where the pressure to succeed can break a child's will to live.

Twenty-five-year-old Suparna, also from Bombay, suffered agonies over her small breasts. She was sent to an endocrinologist to see if anything could be done. The answer was no. Suparna threw herself out of a third-floor window.

To the outsider, such suicides appear mystifying because the finality of the solution seems disproportionate to the cause. Ashish, for example, had grown six feet tall by the time he was

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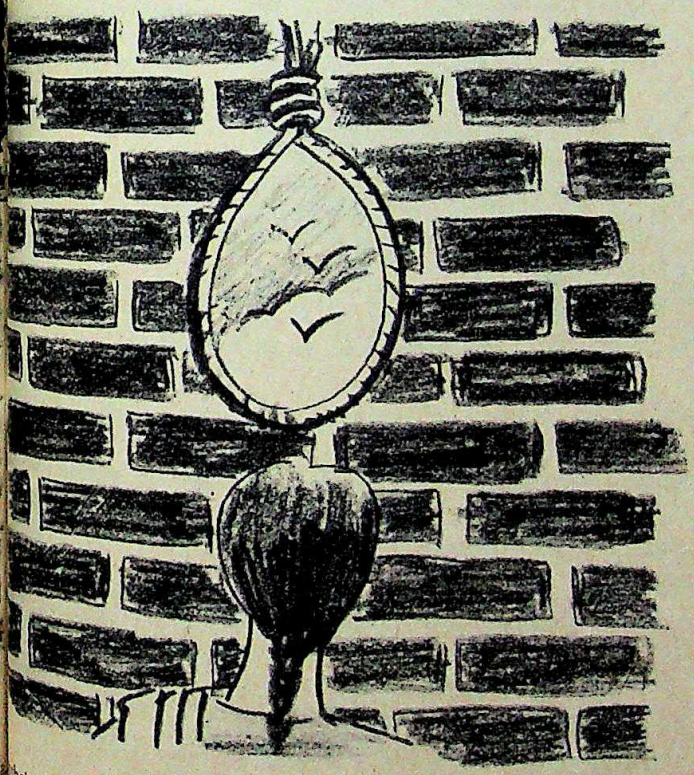
His classmates teased him about it mercilessly. So he ...ed hunching his shoulders and walking with a droop. ...provoked even more ridicule. So he killed himself. An ...ssive reaction, perhaps, but such anxieties, when they ... top of the normal turmoil of adolescence, can ...ume the young mind.

Dr S. G. Dastoor, director of the Samaritans, a counselling ...e in Bombay, has seen thousands of adolescents on the ...k of suicide in the past 26 years of her professional life. As ...umbers increase, she feels frustrated with the families: "If ...parents bothered to spend more time with their children ...found out what was troubling them, their lives could be ...d. I often think it's the parents who need counselling."

PSYCHIATRISTS believe the breakdown of the joint family has a lot to do with the distress and loneliness which can spark off suicidal feelings. It used to provide ...motional safety net. At any given moment, members ...d be certain of finding a sympathetic ear, a gentle voice, a ...word of reassurance from within the large unit.

But the collapse—at least in the cities—of the extended ...y system and the emergence of the nuclear family have ...nt that tensions have increased. Couples find themselves



...heir own. This is fine as long as the ...g is good. But when things go sour ...problems arise, the absence of ...one to share the burden or give a ...d of advice serves to intensify the ...ess.

When their parents were quarrel... for example, children could al... escape into the cosy arms of their ...mother, aunt or cousin. Now it ...institutions are taking over the ...ctions formerly fulfilled by the fam... baby care centres, boarding schools and old people's homes. Says K.N. George, director of the Madras School of Social Work: "Our present day society has become so intolerant and self-obsessed that it just doesn't care enough for people in need."

The changes in the family, combined with the stresses of big city life, have given places such as Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Kanpur and Hyderabad record figures for suicide. Madras leads with 21.65 suicides per every lakh of people. This works out roughly to about 850 suicides a year. Bangalore, the fastest-growing city in Asia, has over 600 cases a year, and about 15,000 attempts. As K.B. Valsalakumari, director of the social welfare department in Kerala, says: "Stress is an international phenomenon but in India most of us don't know how to relax even at week-ends."

Some don't know how to cope with the pressure of studies and deadlines. A Kanpur medical couple, Dr Manoj Kathura and his wife Bibha, felt that they were being harassed by their professors. Dr Kathura was a post-graduate orthopaedic student. The couple made a death pact and took an overdose. They both died. Bibha was pregnant at the time.

Tolstoy once said that while all happy families were alike, unhappy families were all unhappy in their own way. So are suicidal people. Every person's life circumstances are so different that it's difficult to find any common ground among suicides. But some of the reasons why unhappy people can end up pursuing a death wish to its ultimate conclusion are rooted in Indian culture. Such as the attitude towards women. A childless woman, for example, is made to feel worthless and inadequate. Which might be why Bangalore Doordarshan newsreader, Vandana Suresh, drowned herself by jumping into a pool because she was still childless after four years of marriage.

Dowry, of course, is a social evil which shows no sign of disappearing. In fact, it appears to be spreading south from the north. There were 130 dowry deaths reported in Kerala between 1987 and 1990. Says Valsalakumari: "Psychiatrists say that more than half of the women lying in the burns wards of our hospitals are suicide attempts because life had become a living hell."

A poignant example of the trail of destruction that the dowry practice can leave was the recent group suicide of four sisters who lived in the Palghat district of Kerala. Shanti, Sumati, Kanakalatha and Sasikala were totally convinced that their father—a police constable—would never be able to raise the money for their dowries. So they hanged themselves. The youngest was 17. The eldest 25.

Psychiatrists are notorious for not agreeing amongst themselves but on one thing they concur: that the fundamental cause of most suicides is rapid social change. When a society is in flux, when old social structures are disintegrating but new ones haven't yet replaced them, the toll on a person's emotional well-being can be heavy.

Some people are well-equipped mentally to deal with the stress of living in a permanently changing society. Others, who find themselves adrift in a swirling maelstrom with none of the usual support systems to anchor

Suicide is often the only way out for a lonely wife who realises that her adulterous liaison is about to be exposed and she faces public ostracism.

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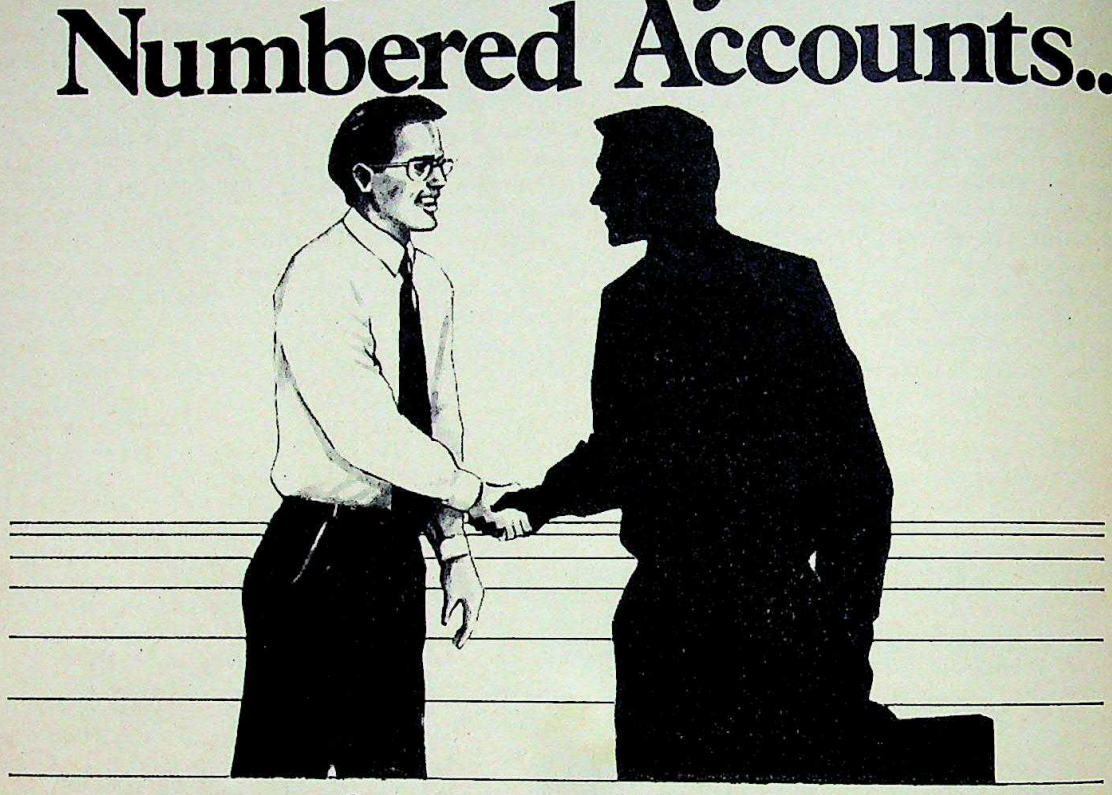

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them, succumb to frustration. As they feel increasingly left behind and out of control, frustration gives way to despair.

Kerala is a graphic example of a wider phenomenon. Of a society struggling to retain an element of continuity even as change is altering every aspect of daily life. It is perhaps for this reason that it enjoys the dubious distinction of leading the rest of the country. Its suicide rate of 21.06 per every lakh of citizens is three times the national average of 7.03. That is one suicide every hour.

The flood of petro dollars from workers in the Gulf brought prosperity to Kerala but it also left behind a detritus of lonely wives separated from their husbands, maladjusted children who often found solace in drugs or alcohol and the weakening of traditional values. Newly-married Sharda, 23, saw her husband off on a flight to the Gulf a fortnight after their wedding day. He promised her he would return in three months' time and take her with him. Three years later Sharda was still waiting. To ease her loneliness, she developed a liaison with a servant boy. Everything was fine until her mother-in-law discovered the sexual nature of the relationship. Fear seized her. Two days before her husband was to fly into Trivandrum, Sharda hanged herself.

As for those who were unable to migrate and benefit from work in the Gulf, resentment at being left behind set in. Matters were made worse by the fact that education and high literacy rates had generated high expectations of what life should provide. When the good life failed to materialise, it led to a drop in self-esteem. A large number of suicides in Kerala are by the educated unemployed.

P.J. Alexander, former inspector general (crime) in the state observes: "The inflated ego of the average Malayalee just cannot accept defeat or even life as it is. Since he is educated, he believes he must get the best in life."

The friends and families

PARA-SUICIDE

A Cry for Help

THE psychiatrist's dictionary defines a para-suicide as someone who keeps trying to kill himself but has no intention of succeeding. Until a few years ago the term was barely known but now it's become a key word among those working with suicidal people.

Suresh Ramachandran of Madras is a classic example. He was racked by insecurities and complexes—fears about whether his parents cared for him, what his friends thought of him or whether women found him attractive. On the surface, he seemed to be a perfectly normal young man who read literature at university. But in six years, Suresh has attempted suicide four times.

Every time he does it, his family and friends overwhelm him with affection and concern. About his first attempt—when he swallowed pesticide, he says: "I knew it wouldn't kill me. I just wanted my family to shower attention on me." Whenever he feels torn apart by insecurities and fears, Suresh either slits his wrists ("It makes me feel better") or consumes some bug poison.

More than 10,000 people in Tamil Nadu last year fell into the category of para-suicides. Says Dr Vimala Rao who works with them in Madras: "They are people who are finding life difficult to cope with. Their suicide attempt is a cry for help. Once the attempt is over, the depression tends to lift and they feel somewhat relieved."

Doctors say para-suicide can best be described as a momentary impulse, borne out of despair. Dr Rao's patients are mostly from the lower classes: battered women or the wives of alcoholics. Having tried every thing else to improve their lives and failed, they resort to suicide. The errant husband is normally chastened and promises to behave better, give up alcohol or eschew drugs. But the effect is usually only temporary.

Most para-suicides are aged between 20 and 30—the age group most vulnerable to emotional disturbance. The methods used by para-suicides are the same as those used by suicides, only designed to be less effective. The upper classes, it seems, choose a lethal cocktail of barbiturates and alcohol. The middle classes prefer hanging or drowning. The poor settle for insecticides or a can of kerosene. The difference with para-suicides is that they make sure that help will be at hand, which is why they rarely leave a note.

But none of this means that para-suicides don't need help. For research has shown that 15-30 per cent repeat their attempt within two years and ultimately 10 per cent of them will die by their own hand.

Para-suicide has to be understood as a person's extreme way of dealing with intense personal suffering. When taken too far, though, it can resemble the crudest form of emotional blackmail. Twenty-three-year-old Priya, for example, first overdosed on barbiturates when her conservative south Indian Brahmin family refused to accept her relationship with an Anglo-Indian boy. "I did not want to die. But to have attempted it and survived has given me great relief."

But since then, Priya has attempted suicide virtually every time she finds her family "obstructive" or hostile. The danger, is that an attempt could accidentally succeed.

—KAVITHA SHETTY

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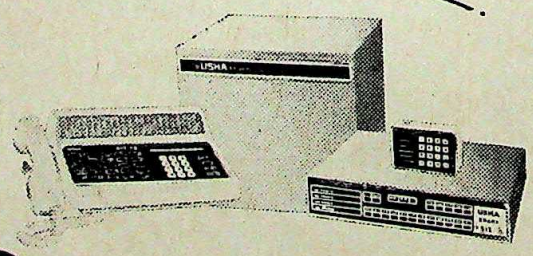

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DANGER SIGNS

1. Suicide threat or other more casual remarks indicating a desire to die.
2. Recent changes in mood and/or behaviour (eating, sleeping patterns, refusing to leave the house, etc.).
3. Deep and prolonged mental depression.
4. Tendency towards isolation and a rejection of all the normal joys and pleasures of life.
5. Getting affairs in order or giving away prized possessions when associated with several of the above signs.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

1. Persons who have made previous suicide attempts.
2. Mental health patients.
3. Individuals who depend on intoxicants to get through a normal day, whether it's alcohol, drugs or tranquillisers.
4. Victims of sexual assault (incest) or violence (rape).
5. Women who are persistently beaten up by their husbands or lovers
6. Maladjusted, introverted people who find it hard to share their problems.

WHAT TO DO?

1. Stay in touch. Let the person know you care.
2. Be non-judgemental (don't act appalled or offended).
3. Talk openly about suicide.
4. If risk of attempt seems imminent don't leave the suicidal person alone.
5. Get help immediately. Call over anyone dear to the person. Or even a psychiatrist.
6. Alert other family members and friends to the person's threats and behaviour.

of suicides normally blame themselves after the event for not preventing it. Sometimes they're being harsh on themselves but there's a grain of truth in their self-reproaches because the last few weeks in the lives of suicides are usually littered with the clues they dropped. The remarks could range from "no one understands me" through to "I'm only living because of my children." Psychiatrists say serious attention should be paid to such remarks. They are a desperate cry for help and attention.

But even people who pride themselves on being sensitive and perceptive can be shocked when a friend commits suicide. Like the friends of T.P. Gopinathan, a deputy inspector general of police in Kerala. No one suspected anything was wrong. But he put a revolver to his head one day and fired.

Some unhappy people will succeed in killing themselves no matter what. They set about it with the efficiency and deadly intensity of a Cruise missile looking for its target. It's merely a matter of time before they succeed. A doctor in Kerala who suffered from depression tried to kill himself four times. On the fifth attempt he succeeded. A schizophrenic in Madras threw himself in front of oncoming cars three times but escaped by the skin of his teeth. He succeeded on the fourth attempt by lying underneath an ambulance which crushed him as it reversed.

The highly mysterious nature of suicide has spawned

SNEHA CLINIC

Counselling at the Brink

THE phone-line at Sneha clinic in Madras is always busy. Over 7,000 people have called in since it opened two years ago. Housed in a ramshackle building, the suicide prevention clinic and its volunteers have helped many desperate individuals to turn their minds away from thoughts of suicide.

The clinic promises complete confidentiality. The volunteers listen; they do not dispense advice. Nor are they trained psychiatrists. Says Saroja, a volunteer: "All they need is someone to talk to. Once they've had a chance to talk, their thoughts become clearer and they're better able to take control of their lives."

The only trained psychiatrist in the clinic, Laxmi Vijay Kumar, helped to found it. She says it is vital that volunteers reach a suicidal person in the first three weeks of the crisis if they are to be helped. This is the most dangerous period because most people find it difficult to sustain such a stressful and disturbing emotion for much longer.

Most people ring Sneha. Others, who are more confident, walk in and introduce themselves. Some return time and again, prompting volunteers to observe that it's a lonely world out there. Most people have no one to talk to. Some volunteers break down after hearing a particularly harrowing account of someone's sorrows. At other times they have to control their anger when rapists and perpetrators of incest ring them to ease their guilty consciences.

The 50 volunteers come from a range of backgrounds. They are interviewed by Dr Kumar to ensure that they are committed and caring individuals before they start work. The only thing they have in common is very busy working lives. But all of them devote five to six hours a week to listen to people who are in danger of imploding if they don't find someone to whom they can pour out their emotional troubles.

The clinic survives on donations from the public. The volunteers provide their services free. The method appears to be working. Statistics on success are obviously impossible to collate because of the strict anonymity. None is ever asked for his or her address. Madras is a big city but volunteers have been known to bump into some of the visitors to the clinic. They are under strict instructions to feign complete ignorance.

Despite the lack of statistics, the reaction on the phone can be gauged, particularly if the same person rings again and again. And many people—perhaps long after the crisis—come to the clinic to give a quiet word of thanks to the person whose voice at the other end of the line pulled them back from the brink.

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numerable myths: that people who talk about killing themselves never will; that suicides give no warning signals; that once a person has come through a suicidal phase the danger is over; that suicidal people are mad.

Experts dismiss these lay views as totally fallacious: 75 per cent of people who kill themselves talk about it beforehand; potential suicides give countless clues; a large proportion of people who seem to be making a successful recovery from a suicidal phase go on to kill themselves within three months; and finally, suicidal people may be emotionally disturbed but they are not necessarily mentally ill.

Most suicidal people are depressed. They simply need someone to talk to about what the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" have done to them. Those who are in mental agony over the state of their lives but don't really want to end it all are the most amenable to treatment. Psychiatric help can often save these people—known as para-suicides *(see box)*—because they want to be saved.

It is crucial to catch these people before they take the ultimate step, which is why suicide prevention centres are being set up in many of India's big cities. All of them find themselves inundated with callers. Crash courses, seminars and workshops on how to prevent suicide are being organised for volunteers to help them cope with the sheer magnitude of the problem. The Medico Pastoral Association in Bangalore, a rehabilitation centre for mentally disturbed people, has started a new training course to help volunteers identify a suicidal person. "Help-lines" are being set up in cities like Madras and manned by volunteers in their spare time. *(see box)*.

Bangalore psychotherapists Nerojini and Carlos Welch say the treatment for depression is effective, provided the sufferers are caught in time. Some of their patients need only one session to improve their outlook. Others need a dozen. Still others months of intensive psychotherapy. They believe that someone like Sujata could have been saved had she been treated.

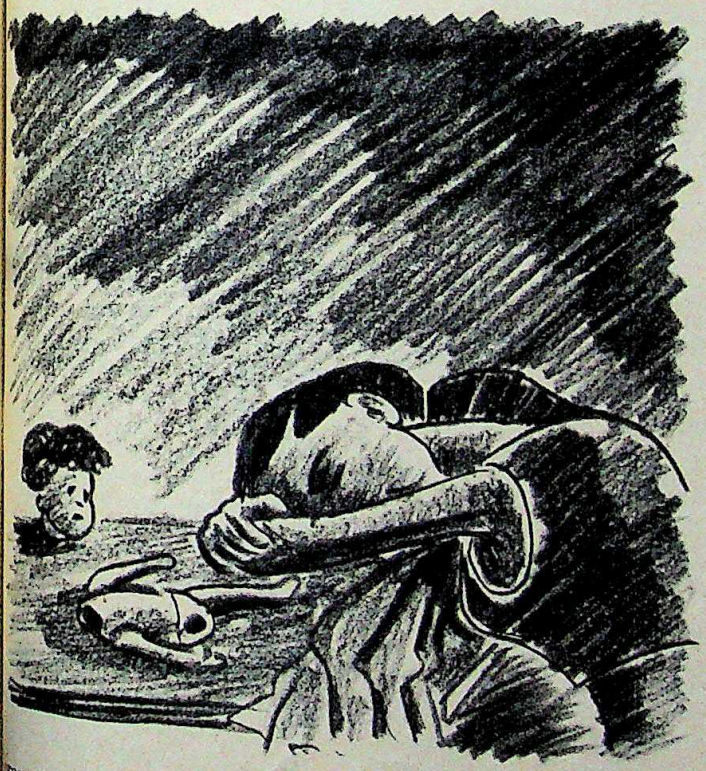
How they would treat some of the more bizarre cases of suicide which seem to be peculiar to India would be interesting to find out. Such as the case of Illyansingham Anbunathan, a fan of MGR, who set fire to himself when an anonymous letter accused his wife of being MGR's mistress. As he recovered in hospital, he explained his motives: "Someone made an insinuation about MGR's character. I couldn't bear to live after that."

WHEN student protests over the Mandal Commission report erupted last year, the whole nation was traumatised by the spectacle of a new form of political protest—over two hundred young men and women attemped suicide by either immolating themselves or swallowing insecticide. Psychiatrists who may otherwise differ on the explanations for such drastic behaviour, agree that one common feature was adolescence. It is a time of volatile emotions and extreme reactions. Mandal simply sparked off already pent-up feelings. Says Kiran Bhatia, a Delhi-based counsellor: "In addition to the intense frustration and adolescent energy that are let loose, came the blow that opportunities for the future were on the verge of disappearing."

Another motive was publicity. The self-aggrandisement and martyrdom gave frustrated youngsters a rare opportunity (a classic case of Andy Warhol's 15-minute fame for everyone) to become national figures. Dr D. Mohan, head of psychiatry at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, remarks: "Otherwise lost souls started finding themselves mentioned in newspapers. In an epidemic, the degree of exposure you get overtakes the pain, the thought of death or even rational thinking."

On a much smaller scale, the same embrace of death as a form of political action has been taking place in Tamil Nadu since the dismissal of the DMK government and the imposition of President's Rule on January 30. Seven people, mainly DMK workers, immolated themselves in anger at the treatment meted out to the two-year-old ministry.

These suicide attempts are exceptional and it's difficult to see how they could be prevented in future. But professionals who work with more "typical" cases of depressed and suicidal individuals know that something as simple as a phone call and a sympathetic voice at the other end of the line can help to convince a desperate person to choose life over death. But help-lines are rare. Resources are scarce. There are only 200 psychiatrists in the whole of India to take on the pain and heartache of the suicidal. Until such time as more help is available, the unfolding of countless little tragedies will continue.



The scorn and sneers heaped by a family-oriented society on a childless woman can force her to choose the oblivion of death.

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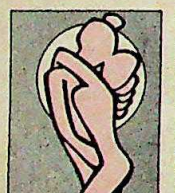
Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The conference: new knowledge

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ORGASM

Dispelling Old Myths

As mores change, the need for sex education becomes urgent



FINALLY, the story of O is out in the open. Well, almost. The First International Conference on Orgasm held in New Delhi last fortnight, and attended by about 300 delegates, certainly has the capital all abuzz and the world's press all ears. Gracing the occasion is sitar maestro Ravi Shankar, who says that music and love flow together. The chief guest, Congress(I) MP Vasant Sathe, delivers the inaugural address with elan and intimate insights. Yet, Doordarshan plays coy: it uses "sex education" instead of orgasm.

What's in a name? Obviously, a lot. The Union Health Minister, Shakeel-Ur-Rehman, isn't sure until the last moment whether or not he will deliver the valedictory address. In the end, the address arrives, but not the hesitant minister. He, too, waxes eloquent in absentia on sex education.

But for Dr Prakash Kothari, the president of the conference, there are no such qualms. "Orgasm takes place between the ears, ejaculation between the legs," he declares. And according to him therein lies the crucial difference between the attitude towards sex as an open and healthy experience and that of sex as a necessary but embarrassing need. A difference toasted by Sathe, for whom also it is all in the mind. "It is important how you feel not during but after sex. In the morning you could well feel that you slept through the night with a toad," he observes.

The conference—happily in the land of the *Kama Sutra* for many of the 25 foreign delegates—turns out to be not just a celebration of love. The end result is a new-found academic respectability for its subject. Dr John Money of Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore in the US, suggests the study of orgasm be a separate discipline called orgasmology—a more "user-friendly" term.

Ignorance and superstition about sex abound in the land of the erotic art of Khajuraho, where the sculptures reveal the uninhibited celebration of sexual joys in ancient India. By way of improving matters, Dr June Reinisch, head of The Kinsey Institute in the US, has proposed a joint research project with the All India Institute of Medical Science specialists for the study of sexual behaviour in India.

The widespread and dominant ignorance is reflected in the flourishing tribe of quacks offering magical solutions to the gullible thousands. The sale of "sex tonics" and other aphrodisiac wares, or the quack sex clinics offering instant virility point to the ev buoyant market. It is al a significant symptom the Indian male's frenzi quest for sexual happ ness. Sexologist Dr D Narayana Reddy, a tached to Vijaya Hospit in Madras, says that fo every one patient he get the quack gets 10.

The major myth is tha men cannot experienc orgasm without ejacula tion. "People are still pro pagating the myth tha ejaculation and orgasm are synonymous," say Kothari. But researc now reveals that the tw need not be simultaneou You could have one with out the other.

Another myth is tha women do not have o gasms. And those who d are not quite nice women Many cultures, includin the western, have denie women the right to have an orgasm an attempt to gain control over them. such societies women are made to fe that they are "harlots and not goo wives", as Money puts it.

A logical extreme of the argument found in some cultures ritually circum cising their women to deny them o gasm, including the Bohra communit in India (as revealed by researchers).

Moreover, men in India are gene ally unaware of women's sexual need and desires. "Most men just turn aroun and sleep after it is over," says Dr Bha from Bombay.

The Indian woman, though mo reticent about her sexuality than h western counterpart, has begun to di cuss her sexual needs and consult the pists. Says Dr Reddy: "Many of my ma patients are now accompanied by th wives. And they talk about their sexu ity quite openly."

Dr Reddy has 18 cases of what h terms "open marriages": wives wh have lovers with the knowledge of the husbands because they are either un able to conceive or do not have satisfa tory sex with their spouses. These a not only women from upper and mid classes, but also from orthodox famili

Women from the lower strata society have generally expressed th sexual needs without inhibition. Th

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"Even today, many men are ignorant about what a woman needs to reach orgasm."

DR JUNE REINISCH
Head of The Kinsey Institute, US

"People are still propagating the myth that ejaculation and orgasm are synonymous."

DR PRAKASH KOTHARI
President of the conference

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not to make love.
hile India's sexual revolution is in
ryonic stage, the West has gy-
from puritanism to the liberation
1970s, feminism and a post-AIDS
g phase—although the epicu-
rings are in evidence again. But
ual concerns there have always
been different, and even conspicuous.

Research related to sex in the West has become very specialised and clinical. For instance, at The Kinsey Institute the focus is on high-risk sex behaviour, usually directly related to AIDS and on the effects of hormones and drugs taken during pregnancy on the psychic and sexual development of foetuses.

In India, research has not really gone beyond surveys and individual case-studies. Dr Harish Bhalla, based in New Delhi, complains that clinical research in the country is totally absent and that the medical profession lags far behind. Says he: "Most of the research is just on paper. The only work is being done by psychiatrists and sociologists."

While most sexologists concentrate on the technical aspects of orgasm, others believe that not enough is being said about the human aspect of sexual relations. "You cannot separate orgasm from the rest of the act," says an Indian sex therapist.

Most vocal on the need for love—and perhaps its most eloquent exponent—is Vasant Sathe. He bemoans the fact that Indians of the golden age of the *Kama Sutra* used to pay attention to love-making, and took their time preparing for it but no longer. "Unfortunately orgasm is thought of as the last point: *bas ho gaya*. In this age of instant coffee and dip, dip, dip, instant tea bags, people think that orgasm, too, must be instant," he says.

The story of O may not have been so easily told in India had Kothari not linked it to sex education, population control and AIDS—although they were barely discussed at the conference.

Certainly, sexuality, as an expert so graphically put it, has "moved from the bedroom to the drawing room" because of the information explosion. But the need for sex education is all the more urgent because of changing mores, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases—including AIDS—and continuing sexual illiteracy. And conferences like this help to remove a few more bricks in the wall of ignorance.

—MADHU JAIN

Celebrating sex: An erotic playing card and Indian ivory cup

"In many societies with male-dominated sex norms, women desiring orgasm are made to feel as harlots and not good wives."

DR JOHN MONEY
Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, US

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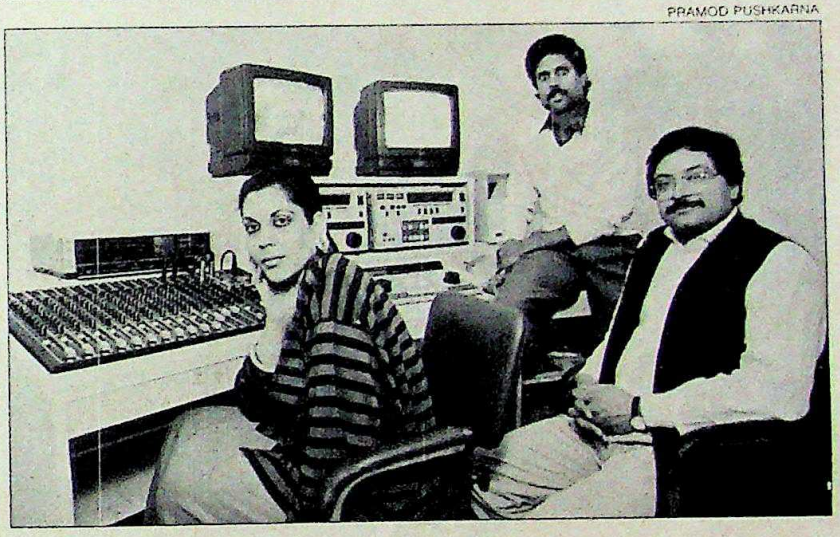
T.S. BEDI

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

APIL DEV

Scoring in Business

The all-rounder is quite an entrepreneur too



Kapil's hotel (top); Romi, Kapil and Lokesh: business acumen

THE bite may have gone from his in-swingers but the business acumen of Kapil Dev Nikhanj is arting sharper if the growth of Dev eatures, the media and communica-on agency he started four years ago, is ay indication. The Rs 5-crore com-any which started in 1987 with an vestment of Rs 10 lakh, has left Sunil avaskar's Professional Management roup, started in 1985 and which now as a turnover of Rs 3 crore, a bit ehind. It has also become an all-ounder in the media world: it syndi-ates articles from top writers includ-g Arun Shourie, N. Ram and M.J. Akbar, manages major sports tourna-ents, does programmes for televi-ion, as sole concessionaire for the ndian Hockey Federation organised e National Hockey Championship at rmu, and recently launched the ountry's first monthly sports video *ports Channel* which reportedly has 000 subscribers. Kapil Dev, it seems, as come to be the Indian media orld's fast scorer.

His innings in the world of business pened in 1983. So much happened at year. Kapil had many heady mo-ents that come but rarely in a sports-ans life. Five years into his interna-tional career he achieved the unique double of 200 wickets and 2,000 runs. In June that year he led India to its champagne moment in cricket—Prudential World Cup victory in London, after staring out as rank outsiders. A Kapil wave swept the cricketing world and his popularity was at its peak. That's when his family opened Hotel Kapil in Chandigarh.

> Kapil likens his media business, where deadlines are important, to limited overs cricket.

It was not just the timing that mattered. The spirit that brought the World Cup home was very much behind this enterprise—taking the fight to the enemy camp. The hotel is situated in Chandigarh's sector 35, which has at least half a dozen other hotels and restaurants. The hotel bar is called Sixer, the restaurant Oval, and the banquet hall Pavilion. A poster of Kapil adorns the reception.

It all helps. "Kapil's image attracts a lot of youngsters to the place," says Thomas Jacob, manager of the hotel. The annual turnover of the 13-room hotel: Rs 45 lakh. "It started as an experiment," says brother Ramesh Kumar who now runs it, "but it has become a success."

If opening of Hotel Kapil was by design, the launch of Dev Features was quite by accident. In 1987, Lokesh Sharma, who then worked for *Sunday Mail*, went to interview Kapil Dev. He floated the idea of syndicating Kapil's column. Kapil saw the opportunity

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and held on to the idea like one of his catches. Recalls Kapil's wife Romi: "Kapil had no time on his hands but I had plenty and was after him to let me do something." Dev Features was born the very same year with Romi and Lokesh as partners.

Kapil would utilise his contacts with sportsmen and get them to write for Dev Features while Lokesh would use his contacts in the media to market the columns. Romi would run the administration. Dev Features's big moment came in 1989 when it provided television coverage of the Indian tour to West Indies against formidable odds. It lost money on that assignment but gained valuable experience and confidence.

The same year it got into syndicating political columns. Later top columnists like Akbar, Ram and Shourie were contracted. Now most of them do a weekly column and are paid from Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 per month or even more. Late last year, when Doordarshan showed no sign of reacting to its two-year-old proposal to commence a sports capsule programme, Dev Features launched the monthly video magazine *Sports Channel*. The company now eagerly looks forward to taking over the Sunday morning Doordarshan sports programme *Spotlight* for 13 episodes.

The day to day operations of Dev Features are run by Lokesh and Romi. But the enterprise very much revolves around Kapil. "His name opens so many doors for us. And he is also our travelling salesman," says Lokesh. When *Sports Channel* was launched last November many friends got Kapil bulk subscriptions thus giving him a good circulation base from the word go.

Kapil insists something larger than money was involved when he started Dev Features. "Many times what I told the press came out in quite a different form than what I intended. So I thought why not write it myself and give it to newspapers." If he was feeling that way, he reckoned, there must be a lot of other sportsmen who felt the same way. So, he gave them an opportunity to say what they wanted.

And, of course, there was the money. "Sportsmen give the best years of their life to the game. So what's wrong if they make some money on the side by writing," he asks. Kapil himself has gone beyond just making money from writing. Apart from 'advising' Dev Features, he helps Bata subsidiary Power with its line of sports goods as a consultant and is on the board of Escorts, looking after the company's sports activities. Not to mention earnings from endorsements (Palmolive, Boost, Power). Top sportsmen like him can hope to make anything up to Rs 4 lakh a year for endorsing products.

Having made a business of his sport, he is now busy making a sport of his business. "His style of batting reflects his attitude to business," says film maker Ramesh Sharma who directs *Sports Channel*. "He is adventurous and courageous—a true entrepreneur." Aushim Khetrapal of Radiant Sports Management feels the same: "I think Kapil is instrumental in the success of Dev Features."

Lokesh feels Kapil's cool composure even when things go wrong stems from his experience on the cricket field where you frequently have to face crisis. Says Romi: "Though he is often not physically present his involvement is important psychologically. I know when something goes wrong he will set it right."

Kapil himself sees the parallel between his two lives. "Both in business and in sport, you are so tense all the time," he says. He likens his media business, where deadlines are important, to limited overs cricket where the situation is similar. The hassle does not seem to bother the man who has "being in trouble is so much fun" inscribed on his bat.

In an age when many sportsmen are content to live with a cushy job, he chose to do something different. Being from a business family he never saw a salaried life as an option. In Chandigarh, where he lived before moving to Delhi, his family ran a timber business, which is still being looked after by elder brother Bharat Bhushan.

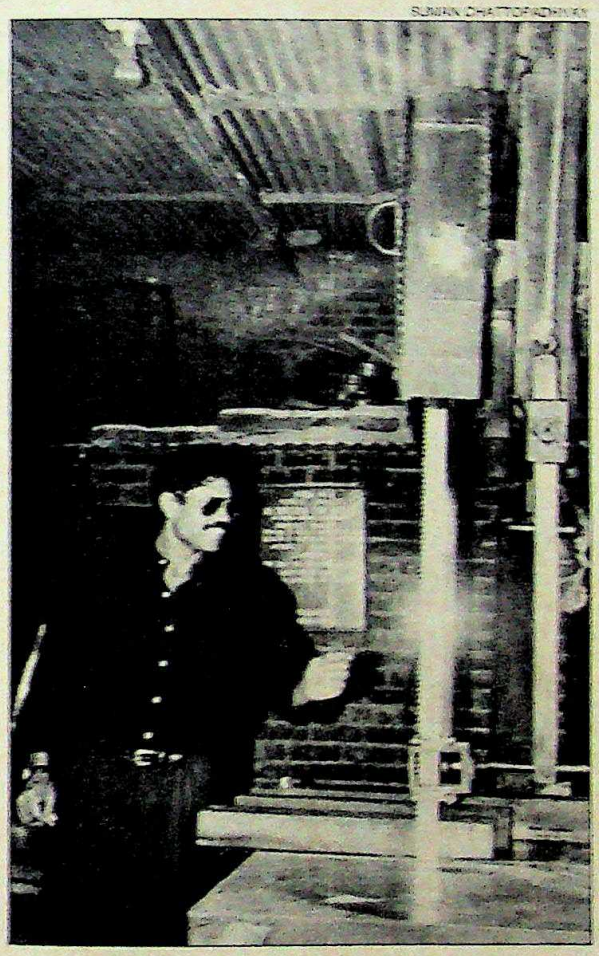
Yet, Kapil is hardly the micro-manager of his business. "He is not the interfering kind and keeps away from the nitty-gritty," says Ramesh. The style suits him just fine as he has to be away for long periods playing cricket. His heart, he insists, is still in the game.

Although 32, he hasn't given much thought to life after cricket. "My future is cricket," he says. But back in Chandigarh, his family is already thinking of future business ventures. The plans include a motel business in Himachal with some local friends and maybe, a coaching centre for cricketers in Delhi or Chandigarh. Whatever it is, it's all Kapil's turf.

—ALOK TIWARI with KANWAR SANDHU in Chandigarh

Kapil in his saw mill

SUMAN CHATTERJEE/INDIA TODAY



The ace all-rounder belongs to a business family and never saw a regular salaried life as an option.

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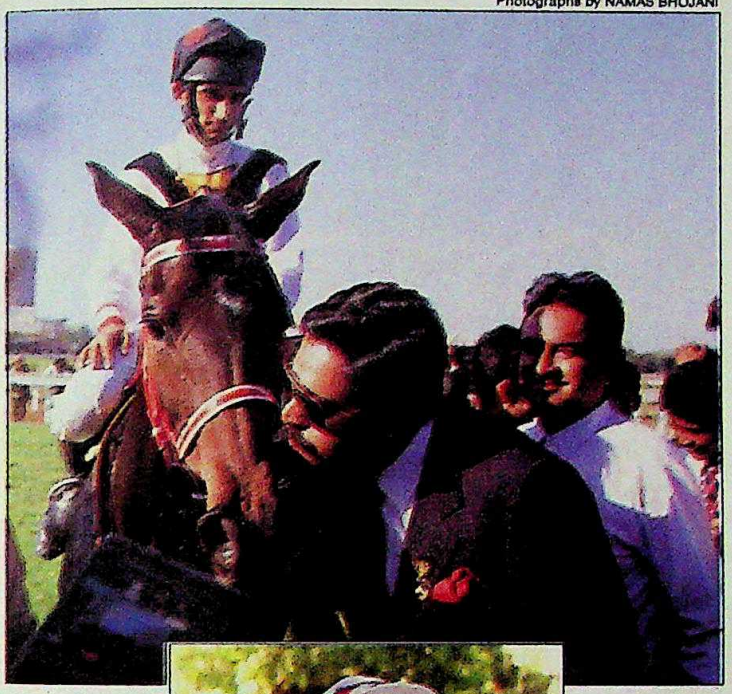
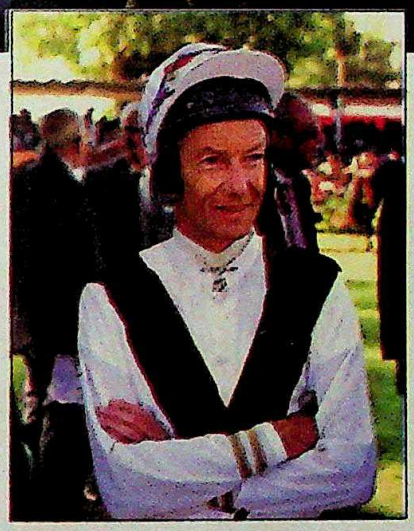
VIJAY MALLYA

Galloping Success

The tycoon gives a fillip to Indian racing

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI





Mallya with Shroff astride winner Starfire Girl; and (inset) Piggott

AFTER the thundering finish to the 1991 McDowell Indian Derby last fortnight, an imposing figure in a black suit charged onto the green, flung his arm around the winner, Starfire Girl, planted a kiss on the snorting filly, pumped the jockey's arm, and then, led the champion thoroughbred to wild cheers from the stands. The filly, of course, was the favourite for the race. But a name which also spells popularity on the turf belongs to the Derby winner's owner, Vijay Mallya.

Seven years ago the head of the UB Group was just another rich man struck by the fatal attraction of thoroughbred racing. Today he is undoubtedly the king of Indian racing, with a stable of 100 top class horses and victories in more than 50 Classic races. Every year, he now invests Rs 1 crore in buying the best colts and fillies produced by Indian stud farms. Furthermore, the liquor companies in the UB Group put in another Rs 50 lakh to sponsor glamorous events at the three major racing centres—Bombay, Bangalore and Calcutta.

Not since the legendary Maharajahs lavished their fortunes on what is described as 'the king of sports' has any individual acquired so much significance for Indian racing. Now the liquor magnate is going international with his racing interests. Last year, Mallya purchased a well-rated three-year-old filly Aldbourne in Britain and went on to win two races on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Budweiser Breeders' Cup in the US. Later in October, at the famous Newmarket sales in Britain, he invested £100,000 on five well-bred youngsters. Mallya's UB International is putting up £200,000 this year to sponsor racing at London's Sandowne Park track. "Owners like Mallya do a lot of good for racing," says Gary Millard-Bourne, director of the *Racing World* video magazine which sent a team along with champion British jockey Lester Piggott for a special report on Indian racing.

Bringing Piggott down to India to participate in the Indian Derby was another coup by Mallya. He jumped at the opportunity when he was told that the shy, legendary jockey, who has returned triumphantly to the track after doing time in jail for income tax evasion, would be willing to try his skills on an Indian horse. "I said, let's create some excitement with Lester Piggott, and we did it," said Mallya.

Piggott wore Mallya's by now famous colours—a black 'V' emblazoned on a white shirt—in two races on Derby Day. In the first, the 52-year-old British jockey sent his fans into ecstasies winning narrowly on Scorpio against the favourite. But the real test was the 2,400-metre McDowell Indian Derby, with 15 of India's best four-year-old colts and fillies straining to win the blue riband of Indian racing. Six of the thoroughbreds were from Mallya's Bangalore and Bombay stables. Since Mallya had given first choice to champion Indian jockey Pesi Shroff, who decided to ride Starfire Girl, Piggott had to be content with riding Speedbird, a filly which eventually disappointed everyone.

But the day clearly belonged to Mallya, who had won the Indian Derby only once before with Cordon Bleu in 1988. This time, thanks to sponsorship from McDowell, the total stakes for the prestigious race had swollen to nearly Rs 15 lakh. Not only was the entire Royal Western India Turf Club (RWITC) complex bedecked with banners promoting McDowell, but the public address system constantly blared the UB anthem. For the liquor baron, horse-racing provides an ideal forum for promoting brands like McDowell whisky and Kingfisher beer. "Whatever we put into promoting racing, my company gets its money's worth," maintains Mallya.

For racing insiders, though, complaining for long of the Government's shortsighted policy towards the sport, Mallya's involvement has also given a welcome boost to both breeding and racing. "Mallya is the ideal racehorse owner—he invests well, is keen on winning, but stays away from turf politics," says *Indian Thoroughbred* Editor Gautam Kotwal.

If Mallya succeeds in building up an international stable of champion horses in the years to come, the experience and the bloodstock he is likely to acquire are sure to provide a further boost to Indian racing.

—M. RAHMAN

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ADNAN KHASHOGGI

CREATING A STIR

The visit of the notorious middleman leaves a trail of perplexing questions

Khashoggi being given a traditional welcome by Dr Jain and his wife in Delhi: flaunting contacts

By HARINDER BAWEJA

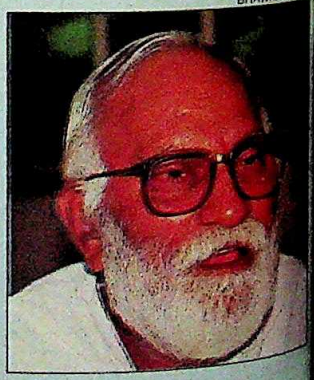
HE says he can pick up the phone and speak to King Fahd in Saudi Arabia or Hosni Mobarak in Egypt. Or even Saddam Hussain and George Bush. And when he drops by in New Delhi, prime ministers past and present come calling. But in India, where you are known by the company you keep, Adnan Khashoggi, the internationally reputed arms dealer, is not the best dinner companion.

The doors of Indian homes, where Khashoggi broke bread with the famous and the controversial, were flung open for him by the high flying godman, Chandra Swami, who Khashoggi calls his guru and friend. The red carpet had been laid out for him when he stepped out of his swanky DC-10 with his sons, Mohammed and Omar, a private secretary, masseur, hairdresser and bodyguards in tow. The reception committee was no less impressive. He was garlanded by a beaming Kailash Nath Aggarwal (Mamaji), Chandra Swami's close aide, C.B. Gautam, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's secretary, and the BJP's Dr J.K. Jain.

A warm hand shake, and the convoy wound its way from Palam Airport to the dusty tracks leading to Bhondsi, the prime minister's private retreat where Khashoggi shook hands with Chandra Shekhar and greeted his guru, Chandra Swami. "All of them looked quite impressed. Khashoggi, by Chandra Swami's proximity to the prime minister; Chandra Shekhar by Khashoggi's closeness to the godman and Chandra Swami was more than elated for this was his chance to prove his connections," said a senior police official who was present. But Chandra Swami was defensive: "I wanted him to visit Bhondsi, so he could see the simple lifestyle of the prime minister."

Not many were convinced that Khashoggi came just to see his guru. "Why seek out Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi if you've come just to meet your swamy? There is a moral criterion about whom you dine with, specially

BHAWAN SINGH



"He told me he wanted to give me money for my rural projects, but I turned it down."
NANAJI DESHMUKH

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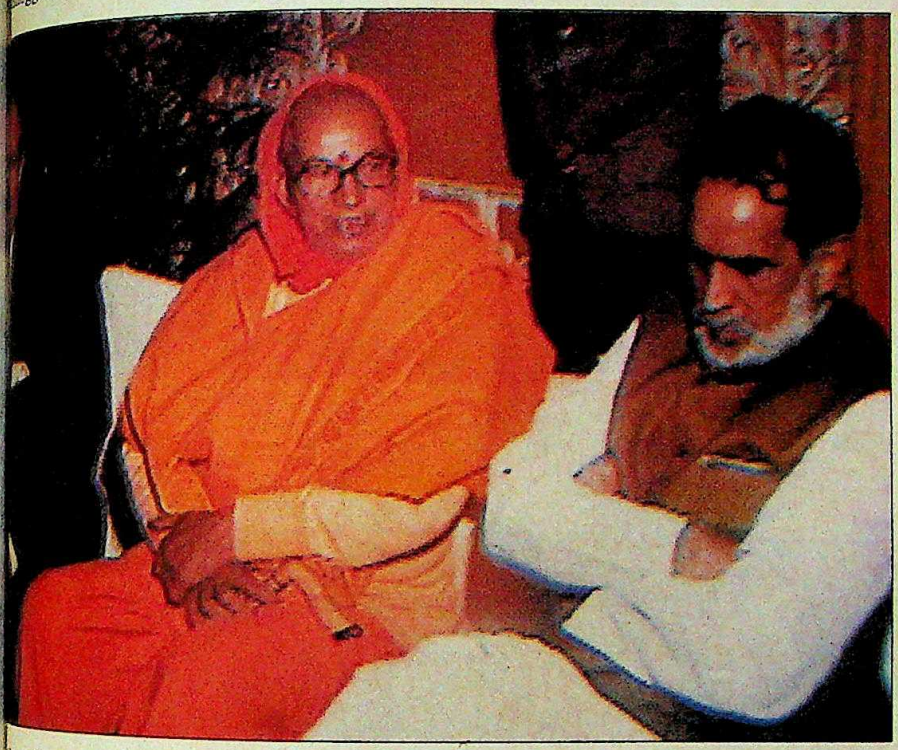
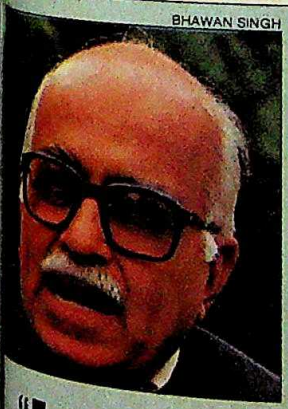
you have the responsibility of ing the Government," scoffs a se- Union minister, who stayed away the dinner hosted by Dr Jain. he prime minister obviously does think so. He, in fact, was sold as an tion, for the invitations not only that the dinner was in honour of hoggi but that the prime minister had "kindly consented to be present". Chandra Shekhar missed the traditional welcome given to Khashoggi and his entourage at Jain's residence where they were showered with flower petals, but spent most of his one hour there in the company of the honoured guest. The video recording of the dinner, by Jain's own studio team, shows a smiling Khashoggi walking with Jain's mother and his wife, Ragini Jain, performing the *aarti* in welcome and him sitting with the prime minister.



Video still showing Khashoggi, a sadhu and Chandra Shekhar: unwanted incursion



BHAWAN SINGH

"I don't know Khashoggi at all but would not associate with a man of his reputation."
L.K. ADVANI

JAIN was equally blase about the fact that he was entertaining Khashoggi. "It was a social dinner. I was only returning his hospitality. I've stayed at his house in New York, so can't I host a simple non-alcoholic, vegetarian dinner for him? So what if he sells arms. The policy of my party too is that we don't believe in social or political untouchability," says Jain. The BJP, however, considered it a major embarrassment and felt that it had lost an opportunity to sharpen its attack against both Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi. The party sent a stern message by dropping Jain from the party's prestigious national executive. Jain now says that if only he had known that the dinner would harm his party's interest he would have reconsidered it. He now plans to send a proposal to Doordarshan asking them to telecast the video of the dinner. He is also willing to sell the footage. His price: Rs 60,000 per minute of the 20-minute film.

Says L.K. Advani who declined the invitation: "I was invited only a few hours before the dinner. I don't know Khashoggi at all but I would not associate with a man of his reputation." There were others, however, who were more than just pleased to be introduced to the arms dealer. Farooq Abdullah, Dr Subramanian Swamy, Om Prakash Chautala, former RSS supremo Nanaji Deshmukh, industrialists Jayant Malhotra and Vishnu Hari Dalmia were amongst the prominent invitees. And of course, Chandra Swami, who came with his entourage of six sadhus.

The guru and shishya were obviously out to impress the powerful and the mighty. It is perhaps, no coincidence that Khashoggi got a call while at Jain's house and he immediately put the phone down and asked Jain if he had STD facility as he wanted to make a call to King Fahd. "It was a self-promotion trip," said one of the invitees, referring to the 'telephone drama' enacted by the arms dealer.

The guru, however, boasts: "If the prime minister wants, Khashoggi can even get a loan of $30 billion. And so what? The money won't go into my or Chandra Shekhar's pocket but will be used for the betterment of India." Apparently this is what Khashoggi is reported to have told Chandra Shekhar at the Bhondsi farmhouse—an offer to secure a $3 billion loan for India from the Saudi king. There is also speculation that Khashoggi conveyed to the prime minister that he could secure evidence to prove how the Bofors money reached Rajiv Gandhi via Jordan. Khashoggi knew that this information would be of use to Chandra Shekhar, who is dependent on the Congress(I)'s support.

In keeping with his style of talking to both sides, so that he can play one against the other, Khashoggi told Rajiv Gandhi that he could use his contacts in the Arab world to get him to play an important role in the current crisis arising out of the Gulf war.

Congress(I) leaders K.K.Tewary and Sitaram Kesari, who termed the prime

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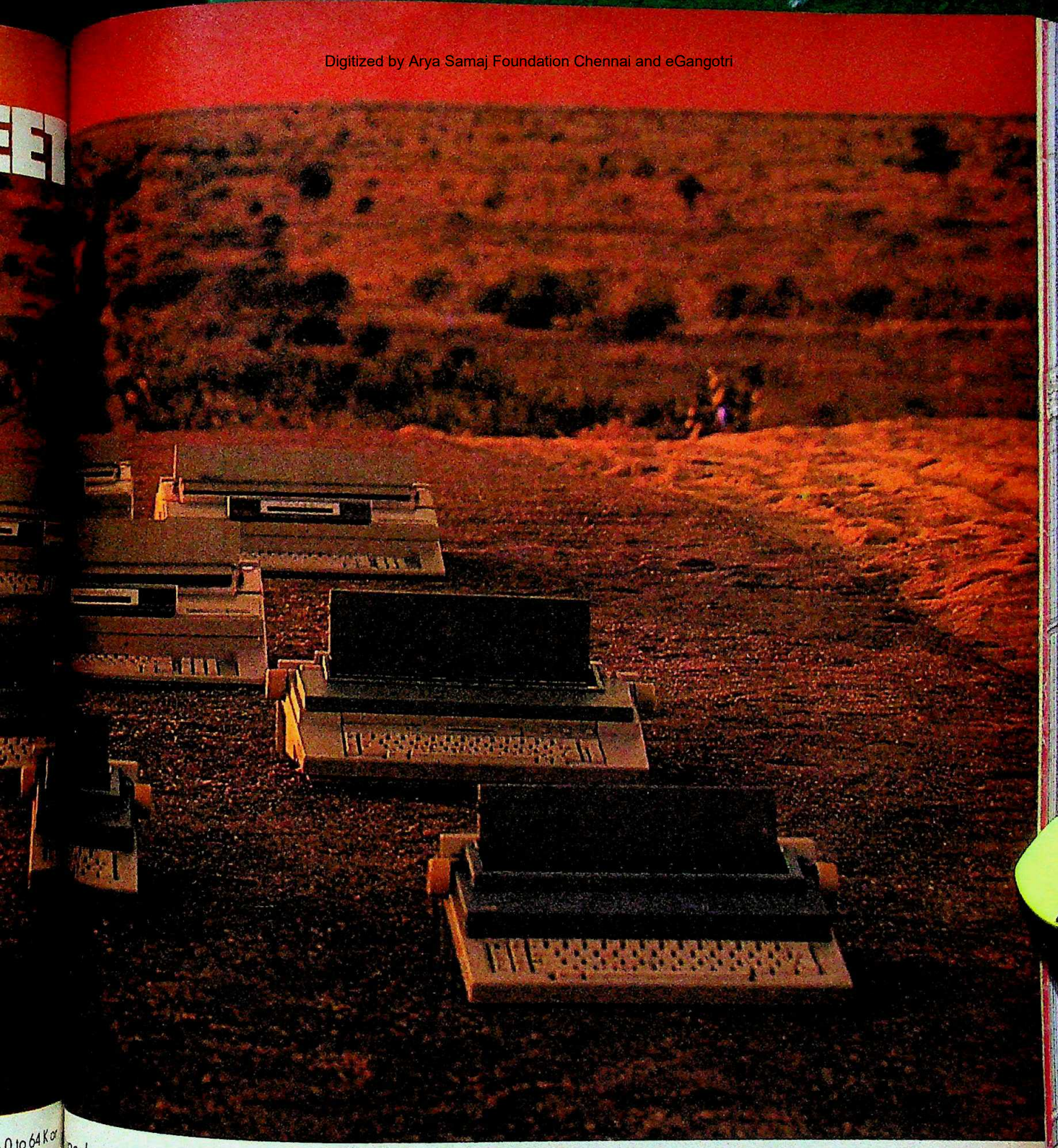

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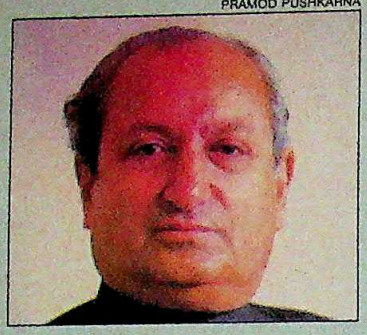

"I spoke to him about the Middle East. I see no reason why I should avoid meeting him."
ROMESH BHANDARI

CHANDRA SWAMI

Dodging the Law

NEVER mind if you are charged with forgery or misappropriation of funds. Never mind, too, if you have been booked under FERA or are being investigated by the CBI. So long as you have the prime minister for a friend, that is.

Chandra Swami, booked under criminal cases filed by the CBI and the Directorate of Enforcement, has assumed inordinate political importance ever since his friend Chandra Shekhar became prime minister.

The godman, who took bail and stayed abroad for all the 11 months that V.P. Singh was prime minister, returned within two weeks of Chandra Shekhar having assumed office. He has been back for almost three months but is still to be grilled by the investigating agencies.

Booked by the Directorate of Enforcement, *suo moto*, under FERA, the godman is being tried on the basis of reports in the media that he took $ 5 million from The *Observer*'s Tiny Rowland in exchange for a taped conversation which revealed the Egyptian businessman Mohammed Fayed's financial arrangement with the Sultan of Brunei for the purchase of London's departmental store, Harrod's, for which Rowland was also bidding.

Registered in 1988, the directorate set out to pursue the case as soon as Swami returned to India. Five summons have gone out, but influential as the godman is, he hasn't once appeared before the directorate. The Delhi High Court, on the basis of a bail application hearing, decreed that Swami appear before the investigating authorities on or before November 30. The godman, however, sent a medical certificate. When he got a summons to appear on December 13 and 28 last year, Swami said the dates were inconvenient. He agreed to appear on January 7, but strangely, the directorate officials were busy that day. Fresh summons have still to be issued after that.

The hide and seek continues even in the St Kitts case in which the CBI has under Section 120-B, charged Swami, his close aide Kailash Nath Aggarwal, Larry Kolb, Adnan Khashoggi's son-in-law and some government officials with forgery and fabrication of false evidence to harm the reputation of V.P. Singh and his son Ajeya Singh. Swami had, according to the FIR registered in April 1989, forged signatures in order to establish the existence of a foreign bank account under the name of Ajeya Singh.

As with the other cases, in the third case too, involving cheating under Section 420, investigations are as good as not taking place at all. Accused by an NRI, Lakhubhai Pathak, six years ago, of duping him of $ 100,000, with the promise of getting a business contact, the case still lingers. "I don't want to say anything. Swami has high contacts," is all a CBI official is willing to say.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

minister's meeting with the arms dealer a national shame and said that amounted to selling the country, we silenced when party spokesman V. Gadgil announced that Khashoggi a his two sons had called on Rajiv Gandh Khashoggi also met the AICC(I) foreig cell convenor Romesh Bhandari, wh says: "I spoke to him about the Midd East. The man has earned a name f himself. I see no reason why I should n meet him."

Khashoggi, who earned a name b making millions through arms dea and investments in real estate and bank ing, also had an eye on investments India. "Having been acquitted by th American jury in the Marcos case la last year, the broker in Khashoggi looking for deals once again. And wh better place than his guru's ow homeland?" asks a senior politician.

Khashoggi, who loves to play th rich man, dangled cash in front of som of the guests he dined with. "He told m that he wanted to give me money for m rural development projects, but I p litely turned down his offer saying

Chandra Swami, and Adnan Khas

don't accept foreign aid. I didn't kn Khashoggi would be there or el would not have gone," says Deshmuk

Ahmed Bukhari, son of the Jam Masjid Imam Syed Abdullah Bukh too was practically conned into atte ing a lunch at Mamaji's residence. "T soon after I was introduced to Kh shoggi. I didn't know he would there," says Bukhari, refuting charg that the arms dealer also tried to p suade the Muslim clergy into agreeing shift the Babri mosque. Chandra Sw

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has been dabbling in the Ayodhya
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Clearly, the visit did not achieve
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e four-day visit of Khashoggi and
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unanswered questions, the most
tant being whether a man with a
reputation like Khashoggi should
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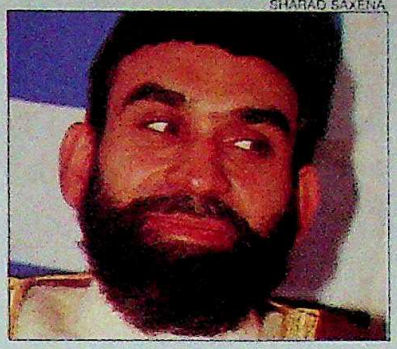
"I left soon after I was introduced to Khashoggi. I did not know that he would be there."
AHMED BUKHARI

SHARAD SAXENA



PROFILE

Arms and the Man

IF it's a multi-billion dollar deal he must be hovering somewhere around. Be it the sale of a fancy department-store chain in London, weapon systems to Saudi Arabia, or prime property in Manila, a part of the money goes to him. Adnan Khashoggi is the ultimate middle man, the smooth-operating double-dealer, a fixer of fantastic reach who has access to the powerful and the mighty. When he was out on a $10 million bail in New York last year, he had to go around with an electronic beeper-bracelet so that the police could keep track of the high flier.

Till Khashoggi was arrested in Switzerland in 1989 at the request of the US authorities—the charge was that Marcos and Khashoggi had created phoney, back-dated documents claiming to prove that certain property had been sold from Marcos to Khashoggi—there was no stopping him. Khashoggi had 12 homes, 100 Mercedes limousines, a $76-million yacht—which he later sold to Donald Trump for $29 million—and he pocketed an estimated $100 million every year as commission for different deals especially arms, controlling the sale of almost 80 per cent of weapon systems to Saudi Arabia.

By the time he was acquitted on July 3, 1990, Khashoggi had been reduced to an estimated personal fortune of around $54 million and a house each in France, Spain and New York and also a jet. He had agreed in court to waive all claims to millions of dollars in art works and real estate in return for which the state dropped many charges against him. One of the jurors said that the case was prepared by the Government and there was no proof against him. If convicted he would have had to spend 10 years in jail.

Getting hauled up, and slipping out of it is all part of Khashoggi's life as it is of any other middleman. And he defends his job with pride and self-righteousness. "I am a merchant-banker who has made a tremendous amount of money by expediting the sale of weapons," he told an interviewer when he was on bail in the US. Selling weapons must have been what he was doing in Iran too, for when the Iran-Contra deal was exposed and shook the American presidency, Khashoggi's name was linked to it. "I didn't personally drop any bombs but sold arms for legitimate defence of our oil fields," he said.

He has no qualms about his brokering or what he calls the job of "expediting the sale of weapons". In an interview to *The New York Post* he even went to the extent of saying that he was creating jobs in the US by helping companies like Lockheed and Northrop find a market. He asked: "Are you accusing American shareholders of being dirty people because planes are manufactured there? Lockheed was nearly bankrupt when I came into the picture. It was I who saved them."

—REKHA BASU in New York

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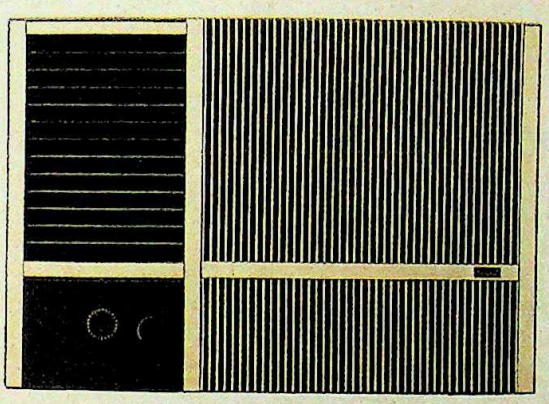

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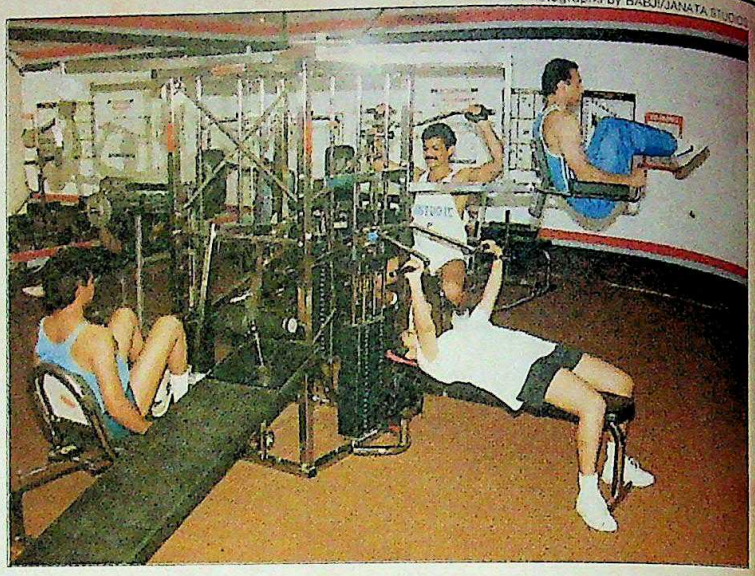
HYDERABAD

Freaking Out on Fitness

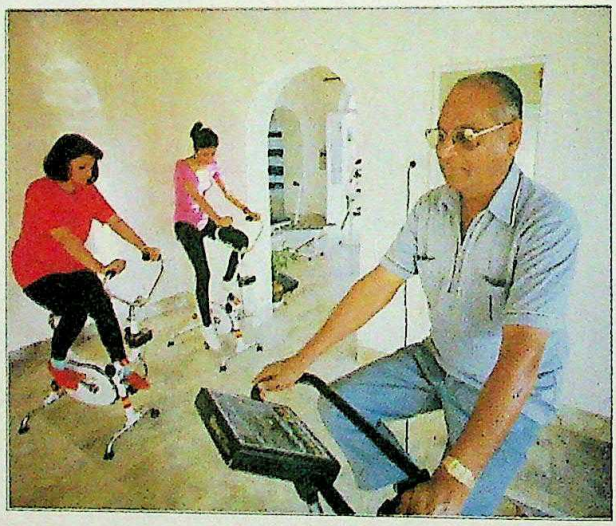
Health club boom is on

Photographs by BABJI/JANATA STUDIO



WITH a heave the Hyderabadi is shattering his stereotyped laid-back image. Sporting jocks and leotards, he is pulling, pushing and pumping iron, swinging to aerobics music and generally working up a sweat. Then he relaxes by getting massaged, before jumping into a jacuzzi or sauna. Spurring him on are a dozen health clubs that have sprouted in Hyderabad in the past two years. The fitness craze may have come here late, but the newly-opened clubs boasting state-of-the-art equipment are making sure it has come in a big way.

And the fitness craze is coursing through even collegiates and housewives besides the corporatewallas towards whom the clubs are geared. True, the membership fees are stiff, but argues V. Ramana Kumar, a manager of Arihant Food Products: "It is wiser to spend a few rupees a day on exercise than pay more to a doctor later."



Tassha's multi-gym (top); and the HMS' hydro equipment: state-of-art

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- Conditioning packages for executives.
- Costs work out to less than Rs 10 a day.

Health clubs make good business sense too, asserts Y. Rajeev Reddy, chairman of the Country Club that has set up Tassha, a health centre, at a cost of Rs 2 crore. Run by a karate black belt Zareer Patel, Tassha's hardware includes the 15-station Centurion gym equipped with aerobicycles, treadmills, and exercise bikes with readouts of calories burned, pulse rate, pedal speed and distance travelled. Then there are the mandatory massage parlour, jacuzzi and squash court.

But truly second-generation equipment was to be unwrapped in late February at the Health Management Systems (HMS) in the posh Banjara Hills. Says its founder and former diving champion Charu Sharma: "It is more user friendly than any gym because the equipment has hydraulic cylinders which keep adjusting to the strength and speed of the user." Which means both the novitiate and the professional athlete can benefit.

A unique feature of the HMS is to put its members through a series of tests to assess aerobic capacity, body fat, muscular endurance and muscle tears, etc. Emphasises Dr Seema Madan, a sports medicine specialist: "People need a prescription for exercise too."

A comparatively older health club is the one at Krishna Oberoi, which besides the multi-gym has the gizmo to strengthen leg muscles in which the exerciser repeats the action of a sprinter getting off the blocks. The modest centres include Sona's Health Point, and two branches each of Bodyline and Gidwani's Gym.

One reason for the popularity of health clubs is their seductive sales pitch: with work-outs muscles grow larger, body fat melts away, bones become stronger. Diet and living habits also change for the better, thus cutting down on the high cost of poor health. Adds health buff and Telugu TV star A.V.N. Prasad: "I have greater stamina now in dealing with stresses inherent in showbiz routine."

The only riders are the reported hazards of flipping for fitness and the high costs. Tassha charges Rs 5,000 a year for a couple. The HMS quotes Rs 2,500 for a person. Referring to risks of injury from overworking the body, HMS' Sharma says: "We do not want anyone to take to it like fast food."

But health itself and also fitness programmes can be addictive—mostly with meritorious consequences. So, fad or not, the health club boom ushered into a city celebrating its 400th anniversary is bound to continue.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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ance

TRIBAL FOLK ESTIVAL (Ravindra avan, Bhopal). This me- ge of dance, drama, mu- and handicraft was in rk contrast to the Bharat avan's usually elitist pro- ammes. The entire town emed to have converged at e festival, organised by the dhya Pradesh Adivasi Kala Parishad. The tribal artland was transported the city.

RITYOTSAVA (Bhuba- swar). This festival of ex- sively young dancers kept e spotlights guessing. Or- nised by the Sangeet tak Akademi, New Delhi, d the Orissa Sangeet tak Akademi, it had the st of Kathak, Bharat- tyam, Kuchipudi, Chhau, anipuri and Odissi. Par- ularly promising were the formances of Leena hanty and Sanghamitra issi), Lekhya Punjala chipudi) and C.P. yasit (Bharatnatyam).

ooks

CHICAGO OOP (by Paul Theroux; nguin; Rs 74). A strange -paced psycho-sexual iller, it is quite a radical parture from Theroux's rmal genre—travel writ- which was at its subjec- best in *The Great Railway zaar* and *The Patagonian press*. Parker Jagoda is the dern day fetishist who is emed from the very outset.

NDER THE EYE OF THE LOCK (by Christopher No- Picador; Rs 95). After n-Burst of Dreams, the aplegic Nolan was com- ed to James Joyce, Dylan omas and W.B. Yeats. autobiographical novel plays the Irish writer's digious gifts for his exqui- erhythms and meticulous of phrase.

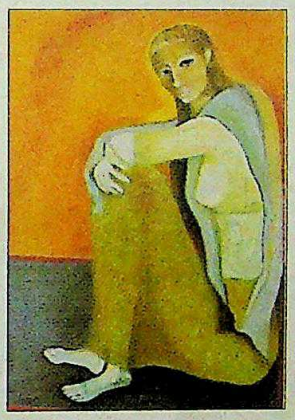
Art

ASPREY AUCTION (HelpAge, Bombay). Tom Craig, who conducted the Christie's auction in 1987, was back in Bombay for yet another effort to raise money for HelpAge. But this time, the auction was conducted by Asprey, the famous Bond Street silverware and antiquities dealer, of which Craig is now a director. Fifty-four paintings were auctioned, with Anjolie Ela Menon's *November* attracting the highest bid of Rs 1.5 lakh. Ganesh Pyne's work sold for the maximum price, with an unidentified buyer picking it up privately for Rs 2 lakh.

NAMAS BHOJANI

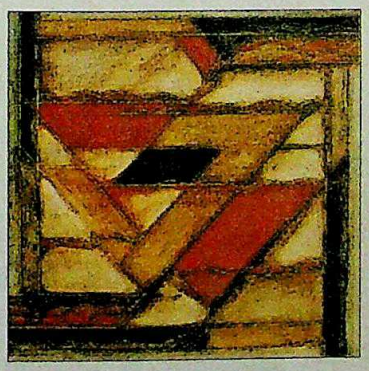
The Asprey Auction for HelpAge

SURUCHI CHAND (Habiart, New Delhi). Suruchi Chand is one of that most prodigious of generations, the post-Khakhar. She is a modernist, whatever that may mean today with all its attachments to the aesthetic slag-heap. Simply put, Chand speaks the language of the Indian fast food parlour which is an anachronistic mix of myth and modern preoccupations—*Hanuman at Chowpatty Beach, Hanuman carrying Nuclear Fuel, Hanuman carrying Solar Energy*, and so on.



Chand's *Draupadi*

AKKITHAM NARAYANAN (Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay). Narayanan is an artist who makes the word eclectic almost seem obsolete. A cultural synthesist who has been defying aesthetic clannishness from the start, he can only be set beside Brauner, who mutinously trashed his Germanic origin, and Jackson Pollock, the unlikely and ugly American. Says critic Gilles Gaultier of Narayanan: "Only artists from cultures outside Europe are capable today of this kind of synthesis." He is one of the few Indian painters to have hybridised the East and the West.



A painting by Narayanan

JOHN ISAAC (Piramal Gallery, NCPA, Bombay). From a tiny village in Tamil Nadu, John Isaac has travelled a long way and captured in his lens a lot. *Assignment: The World* is an enthralling show of colour and black and white photographs taken during Isaac's sojourns across the globe.

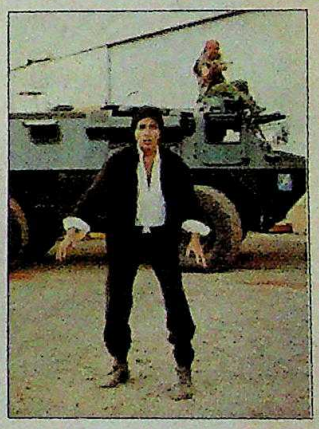
Video

DARPANAM (Video newsmagazine, Bhavna Communications, Andhra Pradesh). It is the first video newsmagazine to be brought out in Telugu. The 90-minute digest leans heavily on the format of *Saakshi*, the slick 20-minute popular features magazine on Doordarshan's Andhra Pradesh network.

Movies

DADDY (Directed by Mahesh Bhatt; starring Pooja Bhatt and Anupam Kher). Pooja Bhatt is captivating in her first film and daddy Mahesh has done his considerable best to bring her thespian talents to the fore. Anupam Kher as her dipso dad (in the movie) is as competent as he always is.

HUM (Amitabh Bachchan, Kimi Katkar, Danny Denzongpa, Anupam Kher, Govinda). The Big B has every reason to hum. According to all indications at the time of going to press, *Hum* is on its way to becoming a big block-buster. The photography is excellent, with the opening shots panoramic. Some of the best scenes have been picturised in the sordid Bombay dockyards. It could well be Bachchan's comeback vehicle.



Bachchan in a still from *Hum*

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Photographs by SHARAD SAJENA

His paintings are marked by their sensual imagery and vibrant colours

A. RAMACHANDRAN

Celestial Canvases

Urvashi is the artist's new passion

IN an age when artists exhibit at the drop of a hammer, 56-year-old A. Ramachandran is a refreshing change. His exhibitions are infrequent, each one of the more recent ones a personal milestone in his quest for beauty or "a glimpse of creation in every aspect of nature".

His latest exhibition at New Delhi's Triveni Gallery was another signpost on the journey of this rather solitary painter. The paintings stun with their sensual imagery and vibrant colours which could only have sprung from a tropical forest of the subconscious. High cheek-boned, dusky women elongated, a satyr-like centaur figure enraptured by them, a lotus pond bursting into life and strange green fleshy foliage which recall times primordial.

In 1986, it was the Yayati exhibition. This time it's Urvashi, the celestial nymph who sprang from the line drawing which the hermit Narayan drew on his thigh with a mango leaf after the god Indra tried to distract him out of the penance with celestial nymphs. Urvashi is "the celebration of the female form, the curve of a stem, the eye of the bumble bee". In fact, the painter also ingeniously paints himself into the canvas as half-animal, half-man creature with Urvashi.

In the myth—Ramachandran jests that he's labelled a "BJP painter" ever since he foraged the Hindu myths for images in his canvases—Urvashi is brought down to earth because of a curse. "I look for the classical elements in ordinary human being."

This wasn't always the case. Ramachandran, who teaches art at Jamia Millia, started out as the angry young painter. Boldly outlined, convoluted human forms added up to apocalyptic statements about modern society. Canvases like the *Grave Diggers*, *The Last Supper*, *Aftermath of the Kalinga War*, and *Kali Puja* are devastating statements about the human condition.

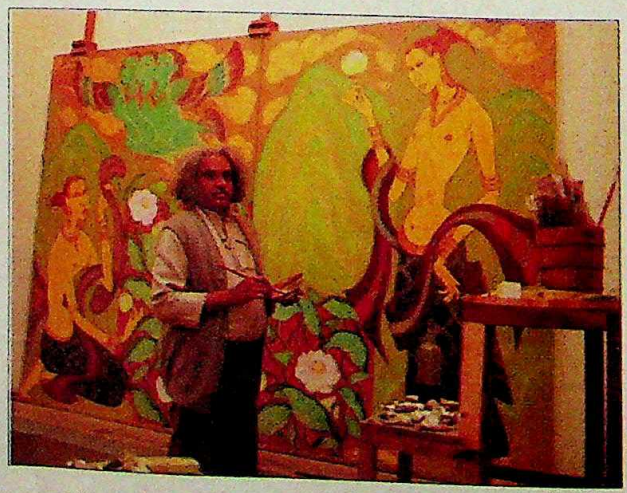
The great change came with the 1984 riots: Ramachandran's house across the Jamuna is located in the midst of where the communal carnage was at its most savage. "The violence was too grotesque. To paint that would be like a black marketeer making human suffering into a commodity to stick on to the wall."

Now Cezanne's painting of a few apples and a piece of cloth, he explains, has more impact on him than Goya or Picasso's *Guernica*. "I am not devoid of human needs but I look at life more tenderly and with more affection."

Ramachandran now wants to link the modern sensibility to its roots, taking a 180 degree turn away from internationalism in modern art. "A man painting in Paris and being appreciated in Delhi, that sort of thing is not for me. After all, every man has his own address."

Home, then, is where the art is.

—MADHU JAIN



Showing his new work: *The Lotus Pond at Nagdha*

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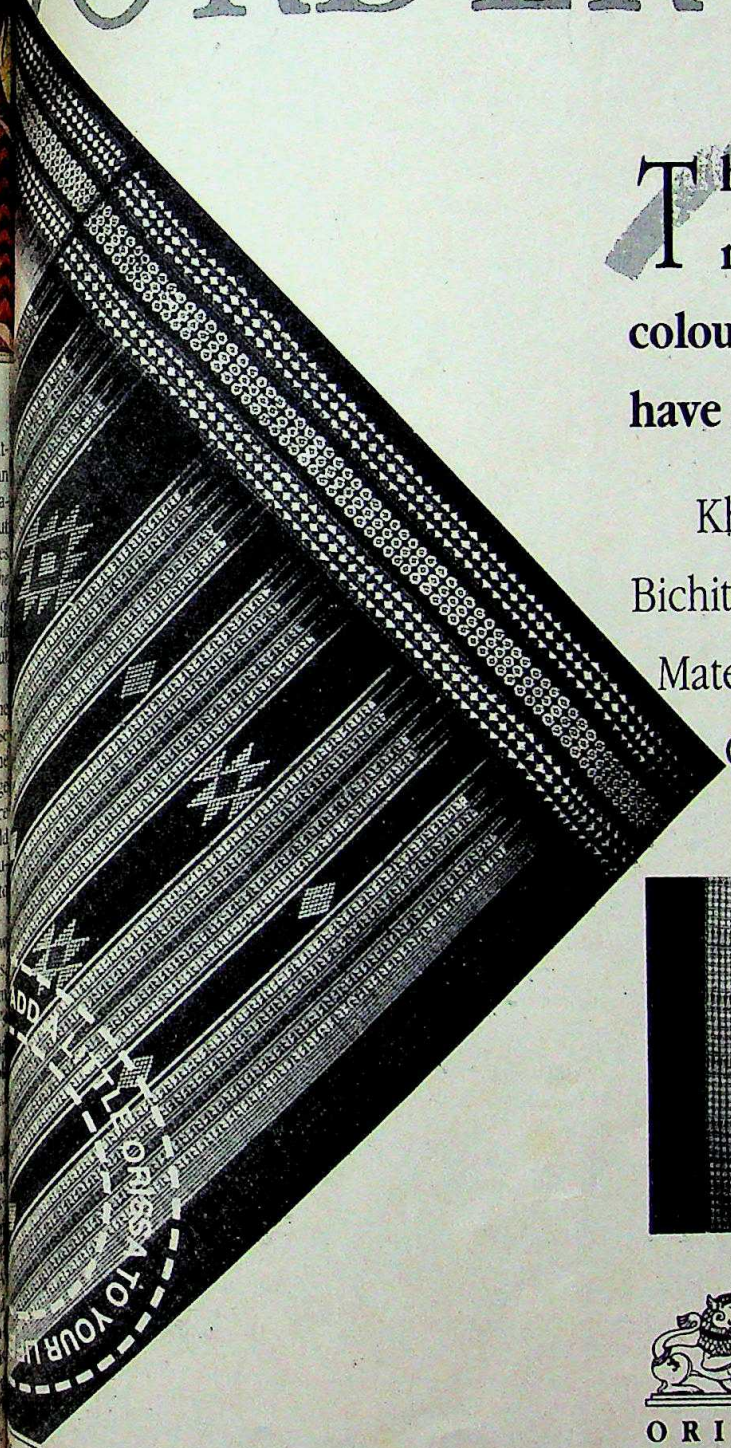

This issue is woven with the most intriguing patterns, and colours — but then, the Borders have never parted with harmony.

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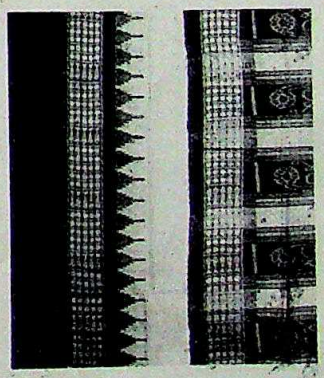

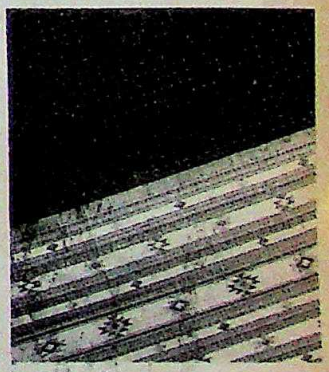

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CBSE

Erratic Evaluations

Marking Snafus affect credibility

THERE is anxiety in the air. As the class XII and X exams conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) draw closer, even the over-achievers are getting the pre-exam jitters. Not over their ability to perform, but over the board's ability to judge them fairly. Perhaps justifiably. In the past two years there have been many cases of students getting their originally awarded marks changed—doubled in many cases—after revaluation.

Consider these examples: Ashish Bhateja of class X, Delhi Public School (DPS), R.K. Puram, got a zero in maths the first time around. The stunned student rushed for revaluation and got a hundred out of hundred. Similarly, Tanvir Singh of the same school originally got 47 marks in one subject. After revaluation, his marks went up to 97.

Clearly, the evaluation system is erratic. Consequently, more dissatisfied students have been going in for revaluation: their number has shot up from 9,700 in 1989 to 19,113 in 1990. Confesses CBSE Chairman Dr H.S. Singha: "The rise in the number of applications has shattered us." He isn't the only one complaining. Alleges R.S. Lugani, principal, DPS, R.K. Puram: "The board has lost its credibility."

But Singha is quick to counter this. According to him, while the number of students applying for revaluation may have gone up, the number of mistakes detected has remained constant. Says he: "Of the total students, only 0.5 per cent have had their marks corrected."

He, however, admits that the marking can't be completely error-free despite the use of computers because the initial totalling is done manually. Says Singha: "There could be a clerical mistake. Seventeen could be written in place of 97." In case of human error, the examiner is held accountable. The penalty ranges from a deduction in the examination fee to being debarred from evaluation work. But as Controller of Examinations S.C. Gupta admits: "Examiners are penalised to a limited extent." Significantly, as a rule the board does not revaluate, but only adds up awarded marks.

Worse, students appearing for the CBSE exam are at a considerable disadvantage compared with the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), the present avatar of the earlier Senior Cambridge certificate. While the ICSE follows a system of standardisation to bring the humanities marks at par with those of the science stream, the CBSE does not. As a result, the CBSE humanities students get lower marks than the science students, and more importantly, lower than their counterparts in the ICSE. This gives the ICSE students an edge over the CBSE students while entering the college. Moreover, colleges like St Stephens which were giving weightage to CBSE students have discontinued it, putting them at a further disadvantage.

Worried at this discrepancy, the principal of a CBSE-affiliated school took up the issue with the Education Ministry. He stressed that this disparity had to be removed at once as it affects over 1.5 lakh CBSE students who are at a disadvantage when compared to around 9,500 class XII ICSE students. But ministry officials describe the problem as a 'non-issue'. They say it affects less than 1 per cent of the total students appearing for the board exams. These officials also contend that people who raise the issue are 'misinformed'.

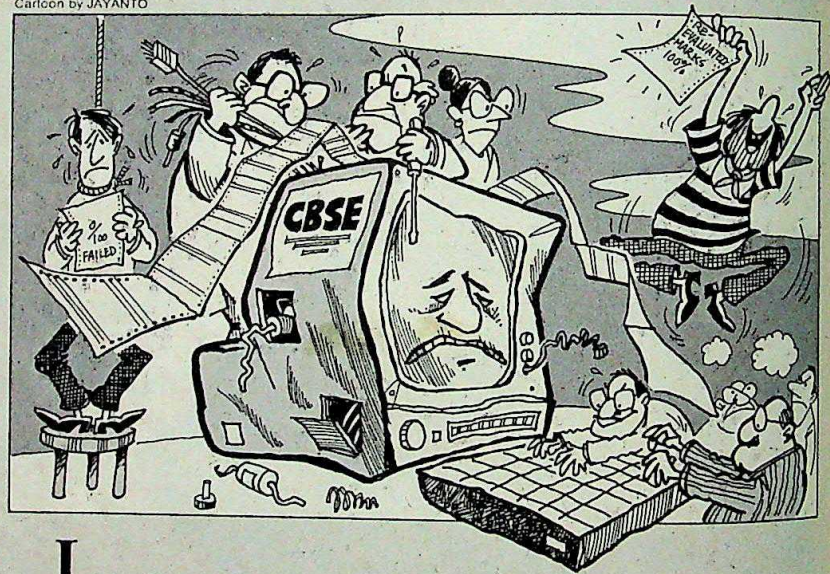
Although officials dismiss it as a non-issue, they have instructed the CBSE to ensure there is no difference between the marking system of science and humanities. Singha, however, is not convinced. Says he: "We cannot bring science and humanities on the same scale." He admits that humanities students of the CBSE get lower marks and proposes to set more objective question papers for them this year.

The board's move to test the CBSE students in five subjects instead of four—as done by the ICSE—has also come in for criticism. It tends to blunt their edge, it is argued, as the students can't concentrate on all five subjects.

However, criticism over these issues has not deterred Singha from suggesting radical changes, including autonomy for schools. But unless the board perks up its credibility, implementing them would be simply futile.

—W.P.S. SIDHU and HARPAL SINGH

Cartoon by JAYANTO



Increasingly, CBSE students find that their originally awarded marks can change drastically after revaluation.

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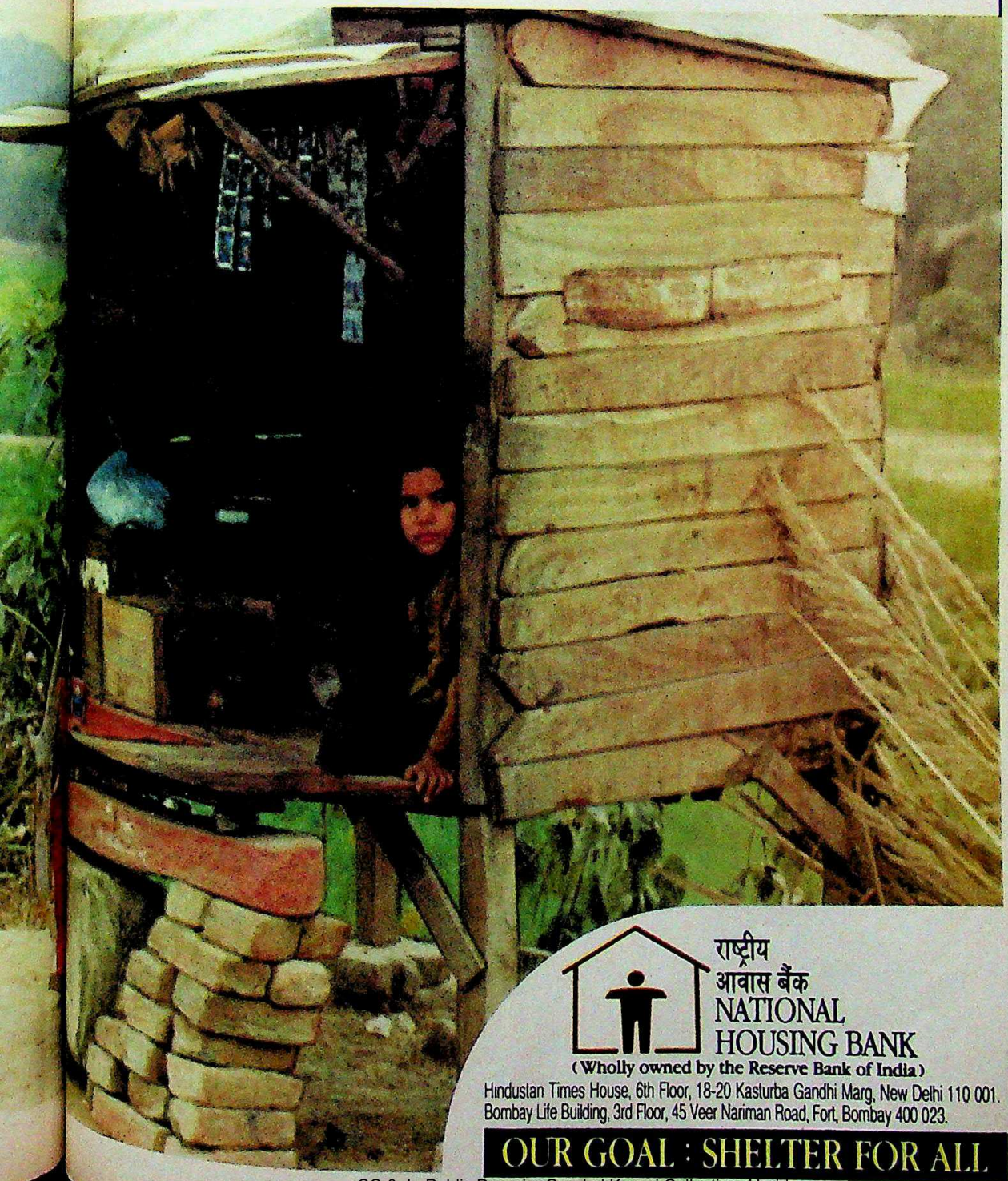

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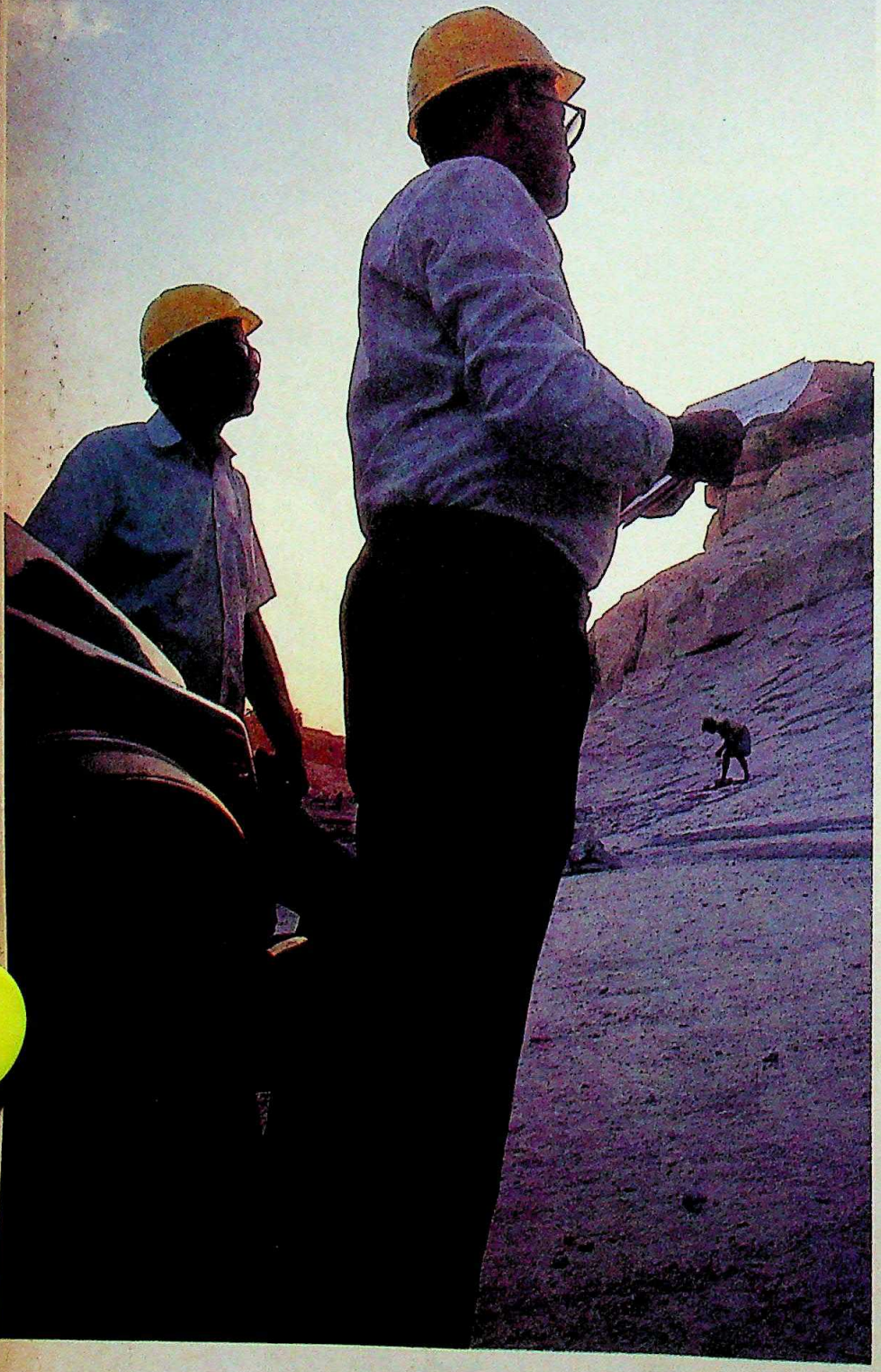

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TAMIL FILM INDUSTRY

Reeling Under Losses

With most films flopping, the situation looks bleak

A platinum jubilee in any industry is usually an occasion for much rejoicing. But for the Tamil film industry it has been a time of intensive navel-gazing and *angst* over the disastrous year 1990 proved to be. It was reportedly one of the worst years in its 75-year-old history. Out of 130 films released last year, only eight were hits and two of these were films dubbed from Telugu.

The financial state of the industry accurately mirrors the parlous state of affairs. It is expected to suffer a loss of more than Rs 30 crore for the year ending 1990 and more than Rs 25 crore is tied up in films which have never been completed. The percentage of abandoned projects is growing. Says L. Suresh, treasurer of the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce (SIFCC) and film distributor himself: "Nearly 1 per cent of films made in the state are abandoned every year and the figure is on the rise."

Hardly surprising, then, that the glamour of the recently-held International Film Festival in Madras, at which contemporary and classic Tamil films were screened, failed to dispel the gloom.

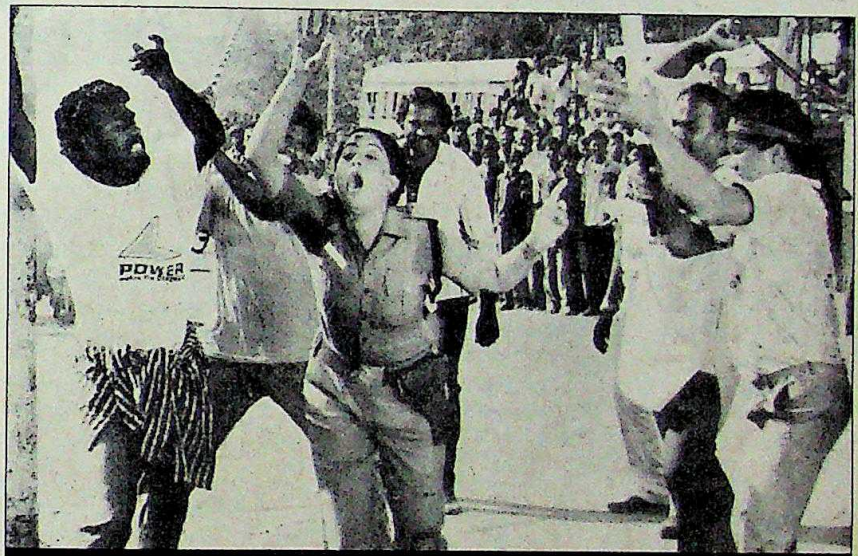
One sure sign of ailing health in the film industry is the failure of big stars to prevent films from flopping. One of Tamil Nadu's top draws, Rajinikanth, whose film *Panakkaran* was a hit of sorts, was shocked to find his next one, *Adisiya Piravi*, sinking without a trace at the box office. Kamalhaasan's much touted *Michael Madana Kamaraj*, in which he did four roles, elicited a tepid response. The efforts of other big draws such as Vijayakanth and Sathyaraj fizzled out ignominiously. Karthik Prabhu, Sivaji Ganesan's son, who seemed able to do no wrong in 1989, sank to rock bottom in 1990, with all his films turning out to be unmitigated flops.

An intriguing feature of last year's Tamil films was that the few which managed to be successful were made by relative unknowns. *Idu Vasantham*, for example, was the year's biggest success. The director? One Vikraman. It was his directorial debut.

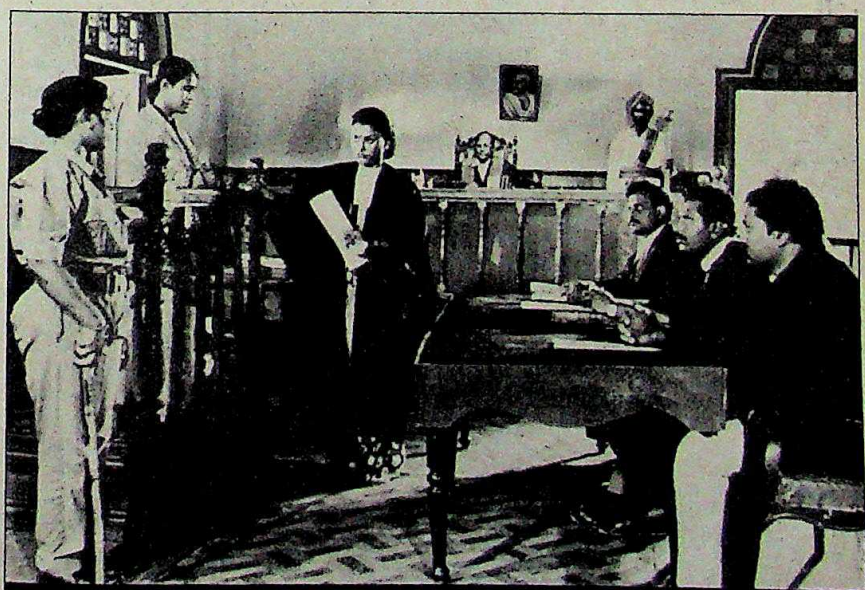
An injection of new blood is essential in the film industry to avoid artistic arthritis. But the other side of the coin of fresh talent is inexperience. Says producer G. Venkateswaran, of Sujatha films and producer of hits like *Nayagan*: "The industry is being invaded by new entrants who don't even know their basic film economics."

The deluge of inexperienced newcomers is being felt most acutely in the field of production and direction where they are blamed for the growing number of abandoned projects.

It seems to be the only area of the industry in which figures are rising. All the other relevant figures are spiralling downwards alarmingly, including the recovery rate. As Suresh points out: "In the 1940s, even when a film flopped you recovered 75 per cent of your investment. This figure thereafter fell to 50 per cent in the '70s. Today if a film flops, it flops phenomenally. Your total investment goes up in



Vyayanthi IPS did well but it had an unoriginal, cliched theme



Even reverting to the masala formula failed in *Oru Veedu Iru Vaasal*

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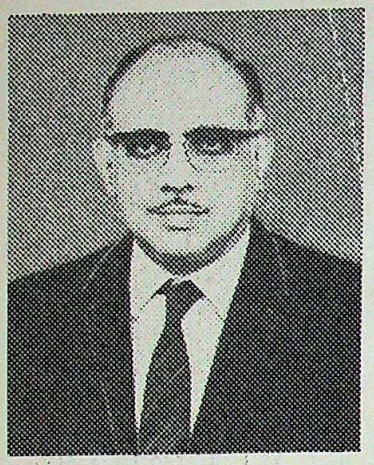

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Chairman
Board of Trustees
CANBANK MUTUAL FUND

'Savings should be a National Priority'

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

1990 has been a watershed year in the politico-economic history of the world. It has seen the disintegration of rigidly-controlled socialist systems, a lowering of trade barriers and the formation of common markets among the developed nations of Europe. It has witnessed the re-unification of Germany, induction of private enterprise and ownership of productive assets in Russia and China along with an invitation to foreign investment and the promotion of the equity cult with the installation of stock markets. The winds of economic freedom are blowing hard. The world is moving towards liberalisation and market orientation, in an endeavour to usher in competition, efficiency and a reduction in wastage.

The Indian economy has, in recent years, witnessed intense buoyancy. Beginning with the loosening of controls in 1985 we have been able to record an impressive rate of growth in almost all sectors of the economy. Aided by a good monsoon for the third consecutive year, our agricultural production has touched a record level. This, in turn, has boosted the vast rural demand, in addition to the growing urban demand, for consumer products, and kept our industry busy and profitable.

THE CAPITAL MARKET

The Capital Market in India, based on the strong foundation of the 8th Plan has witnessed phenomenal growth in recent years. The encouraging trends in the economy, especially on the industrial front and the process of liberalisation of the recent past have spurred the growth of the capital market. This is evident by the BSE Sensitive Index touching 1,600 mark, trebling from its level of about 550 five years ago. The World Bank has already ranked the Indian Stock Market 23rd in the world with market capitalisation going up from US$ 7,500 million in 1980 to US$ 23,000 million in 1989. As a percentage of GDP it has almost doubled from 4.4 per cent to 8.5 per cent during this period. This confirms the vast savings potential of our people and their ready and willing participation in productivity and growth.

As the process of development intensifies, conscious efforts aimed at strengthening the capital markets must continue. Spreading of the equity cult, establishment of more and more stock exchange centres, introduction of new money market instruments, creation of OTC markets and simplification of procedure concerning transfer and liquidity of such instruments should receive ongoing attention.

ROLE OF MUTUAL FUNDS

Mutual funds are wedded to the goal of spreading the investment culture and the savings habit amongst a large number of households. They are geared to provide investment expertise under a single roof, for the benefit of the investing public. The funds perform a dual role in India's economic scenario: as a means for small investors to invest in the corporate sector, and as catalysts between industries and the capital market, to bring about a reassuring stability to the share market and to give an opportunity to the masses to invest in the right companies at the right time, with a promise of less risk, high returns and easy liquidity.

OUR PERFORMANCE

Canbank Mutual Fund, which was conceived to cater to the demands of the growing population of small investors, has been at the forefront of such capital market development and has achieved enviable records of mobilisation, growth and returns to investors, some of which are unparalleled in the world.

During the year under review, Canbank Mutual Fund has launched 3 new schemes, Candouble, Can80cc (1990) and Canstar in India, and two Offshore Funds, namely IS Himalayan Fund and Commonwealth Equity Fund. As in the past, the schemes received an enthusiastic response from the investing public.

The total fund mobilised by Canbank Mutual Fund from domestic markets was over Rs. 1,300 crores, and from Offshore Funds, in excess of Rs. 250 crores during the year 1990.

The first Offshore Fund, IS Himalayan Offshore Fund, collected over US$ 100 million on the first day of its launching.

Another milestone was reached when the second Offshore Fund, Commonwealth Equity Fund, was launched with Batterymarch Financial Management, U.S., In spite of the gloom in the overseas financial market on account of the Gulf crisis, the fund collected over US$ 50 million on private placement, and the fund managers are confident of collecting another US$ 50 million by March, next year.

Thus, with 9 different domestic schemes, the Fund now caters to all segments and offers investors a wide selection. From close ended, fixed income instruments to growth instruments with assured minimum returns and safety nets, to instruments of tax shelter, capital gains, etc., Canbank Mutual Fund is a one-roof

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ancial supermarket offering instruments designed to mobilise ings and yield handsome returns after reinvesting the funds ected in government securities, public sector bonds, call oney market, debentures and equity, in the primary as well as the secondary markets

he Fund has achieved this phenomenal success by its ability to spond collectively to the investors' needs, and prudent anagement of the corpus under each scheme by professionals th financial acumen and an intimate knowledge of the rporate world.

is qualitative achievement has made Canbank Mutual Fund t only the fastest-growing Mutual Fund but also the largest ongst the Mutual Funds promoted by nationalised banks. In s era of speed, this growth would not have been possible but the in-house software development as well as custodian nces.

TERLING SERVICE TO THE INVESTOR

e domestic schemes promoted by Canbank Mutual Fund give investors, big and small, an excellent choice of investments th varying degrees of safety and returns. Different schemes e been formulated and promoted so as to educate the estors and let them choose the schemes that suit them best. ovation is a continuous process, and Canbank Mutual Fund poses to launch new schemes in the near future, always ring in mind the changing needs of the investors.

COME DISTRIBUTION

e are now glad to announce the Final Income Distribution for e year ended 31st December, 1990 as follows:

me of Scheme	Interim	Final	Total
NSHARE	10%	5%	15%
NGROWTH	10%	5%	15%
NSTOCK*	7.5%	8%	15.5%

s against assured return of 12.5%

ONUS

NSHARE

e Board of Trustees have immense pleasure in declaring yet ther Bonus in the ratio of 2 Canshares for every 5 nshares held apart from Final Income Distribution of 5% king an aggregate Income Distribution of 15%. It may be alled that Canshare had declared Bonus in the ratio of 2:5 in e very first year of its operation.

CANGROWTH

In keeping with the Canbank Mutual Fund tradition, the Board of Trustees have pleasure in declaring Bonus in the ratio of 1 Cangrowth for every 4 Cangrowths held apart from Final Income Distribution of 5% making an aggregate Income Distribution of 15%.

NEW INVESTOR SERVICES

Quarterly Newsletter

The future of Mutual Funds in India is inextricably linked to the growth of the Indian economy, savings and investment patterns, government policy towards the private sector, and the development of the capital market.

Mutual Funds in India have a significant and centre-stage role to play in spreading the investment cult and the savings habit. Canbank Mutual Fund will shortly introduce a quarterly newsletter to keep investors abreast of the latest events and the consequent reaction, so as to help make the investor quality-conscious and capable of assessing comparable competitive products in the market.

Investor Service Cell

Canbank Mutual Fund will also introduce Investor Service Cells to look into the problems faced by investors of Canbank Mutual Fund and to provide speedy redress.

CONCLUSION

The pall of gloom caused by the Gulf crisis cannot be overlooked and this is indeed a trying time for us. If we are able to stand it with dignity it will be due to our industrial base, productivity and managerial skill and in no small measure to the growing capital market.

Let this be a lesson to us and prompt us to save more, reduce consumption, eradicate wastage and channelise household funds into productive channels through Capital Market.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On behalf of the Board of Administrators I would like to place on record our sincere thanks to the Reserve Bank of India, SEBI, the broking fraternity, the investors, Auditors — C.C. Chokshi & Co., Solicitors — Dave & Girish & Co., our Trustee, Canara Bank, and our employees at all levels. Their co-operation and support was invaluable and has helped us to achieve and surpass our goals.

(This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the meeting of the Board of Trustees.)

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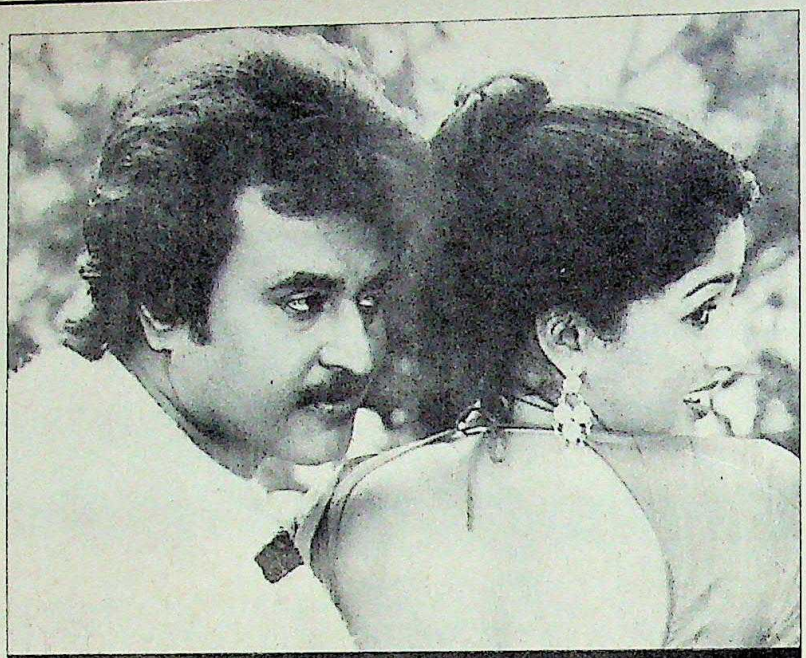
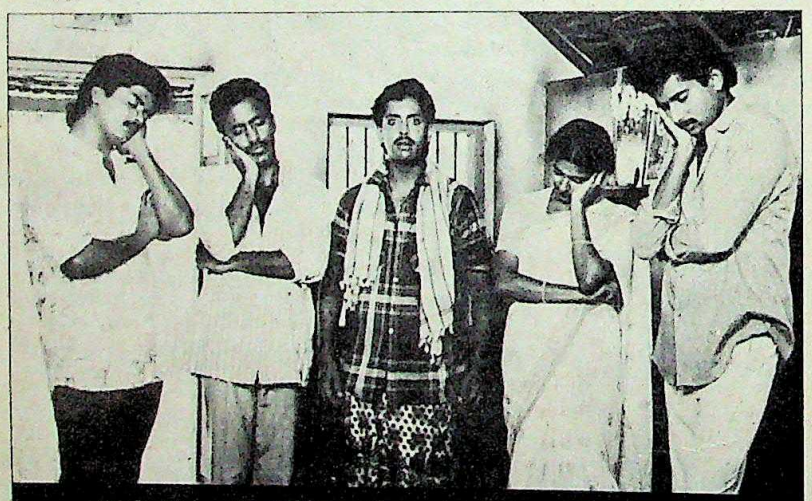


Even superstar Rajnikanth failed to stop the rot in *Panakkaran*



Pudu Vasantham featured no stars but it still triumphed

a cloud of smoke."

The effect of all this doom and gloom has been to scare film makers into sticking to well-worn formulas in place of something more original. Even among the dubbed films that succeeded in Madras—*Vyayanthi IPS*, a Telugu potboiler on a Kiran Bedi clone or *Ithu Dhanda Police*, a bloody formula film—were hardly original. But a leading producer bluntly claims that "they were still far better than any Tamil film made in 1990."

Even famed directors like K. Balachander, who earned a name for himself making intelligent, sensitive movies, has plunged headlong into the mindless miasma that is popular cinema today. His specialities are now brash melodramas. But success has eluded him even with this failsafe formula. His *Oru Veedu Iru Vaasal* bombed at the box office.

WHILE new faces flit on and off screens so frequently that no one can remember their names after a few weeks, the older hands are sulking about the mediocre offers they receive. Leading actress Suhasini, who has made just five Tamil films in the last six years, says: "Now that I am married I don't have to make films to earn money. I can choose good films to do but no one here is making any." Besides the discouraging quality of films made in Tamil Nadu, other factors are also cutting into the industry's profit margins. The rising rates demanded by film stars, for instance. Rajnikanth commands the highest price in the Indian film industry today—a princely sum of Rs 40 lakh. "If one film is a hit the artiste immediately hikes his price by a couple of lakhs," says a disgruntled producer. It's a result of the early burnout syndrome whereby each Johnny-come-lately wants to make hay quickly while the spotlight is still on him.

If all this were not bad enough, the industry suffered a body blow last year in the form of rising prices for raw film. Says M.C. Punoose, president of the SIFCC: "Prices are controlled by the big monopolies like Hindustan Photo Films (HPF) that increase rates at their pleasure without so much as consulting the industry for its news."

In April of last year, HPF increased raw film prices by 11 per cent and just before the start of the International Film Festival in Madras last month, it announced a further hike of 25 per cent. Industry members threatened to boycott the festival. The Government relented and put the proposal on hold.

The boom in videos and cable TV—the scourge of many a traditional art form—has further drawn away an estimated 25 per cent of film viewers. Says Suresh: "Nowadays, by the time a film reaches A, B or C centre, word will have spread as to whether it's any good. If it's a lousy film, people just stay away."

Though last year's picture was uniformly bleak, it is too soon to write off the Tamil film industry. It has been through many troughs in the past 75 years, and one more bad year may well be passed off by optimists as an aberration with no lasting consequences. And it may well be precisely the much-maligned newcomers who eventually save the Tamil film industry from terminal decay. If necessity is the mother of invention, then steep losses, dwindling audiences and higher costs should be enough to motivate them into forging a new direction.

—KAVITHA SHETTY

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Some Faces Are Recognized All Over The World.

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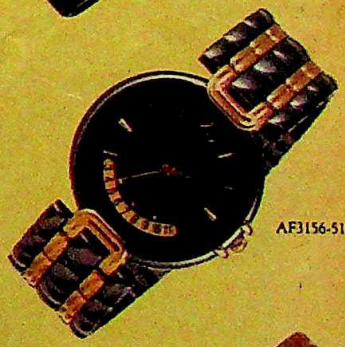

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Migrant Saga

A brilliant first novel

THE GUNNY SACK
by M.G. VASSANJI
Viking
Price: Rs 125; Pages: 276

STEPHEN Dedalus, that is James Joyce, in the last but one line of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* declares prophetically his self-assumed destiny, "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race". Peoples who lack great writers to give a voice to the sagas of their lives are condemned to the black holes of history. Without creative chroniclers, both great civilisations and the smaller fragments of immigrants sink with barely a ripple, either reduced to twisted artefacts under the clinical gaze of dusty archaeologists, or to statistical footnotes in other people's histories.

M.G. Vassanji is convinced that his immigrant Asian forebears do not belong in one such footnote in the story of East Africa. *The Gunny Sack* is the unfolding multi-generation saga spawned by Dhanji Govindji, who left Junapur in Gujarat at the last century when the slave trade flourished and Europe ruled Africa, sailed in search of fortune for two months in a dhow to reach Zanzibar, the isle of enchantment. From there he travelled to Tanganyika, and set up a small shop, in a village Matamu, on the coast.

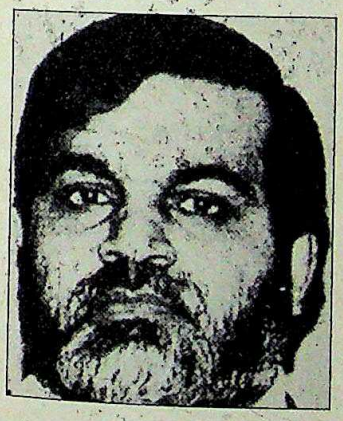
Dhanji Govindji, a Shamshi—a sect Hindu-Muslim sect—like all his countrymen brought his quota of faith with him, but soon commingled inescapably with the land of his adoption. He took a local woman, Bibi Kadou, to warm him on 'cold nights', and it was from this branch of family that the narrator of *The Gunny Sack*, Salim Juma, was descended.

From the cold-repulsing impregnation of Taratibu to the present day narrations of Salim, East Africa, specifically Tanzania where most of the novel is based, has undergone a sea change. Asians there have undergone it all: the hardship and affluence of pioneers; the anxiety and fear of outsiders; and finally rejection as aliens. The material at the writer's disposal is daunting, capable of intimidating a minor talent into sheer silence, but Vassanji handles it marvellously well.

Ignited by his dexterous imagination an entire way of life, an entire kind of people come alive. Vassanji tells his story with that fine blend of humour and pathos that evokes a primal, nameless nostalgia and makes several passages extremely poignant. Also striking is the unselfconscious manner in which Vassanji liberally uses Swahili and Hindi words, and manages to neither jar nor break the flow.

Memorable characters are created and the reader is easily wrapped up in their stories. Edward bin Hadith, *fundi* tailor, who is hooked onto stories and insists the moon-landing pictures are actually fabrications put together by the Americans on earth; Nuru Poni, alias A.A. Raghavji, inveterate newspaper letter-writer and hardcore patriot, who believes in racial inter-marriage; Mattress Roshan, who is beautiful and fair, and 'offers her milk-white behind' to Inspector Kumar; Miss Penny who becomes Mrs Gaunt, leaving Salim and his classmates heart-broken; and many others drawn in fine three-dimensional splendour.

Vassanji: skilled storyteller



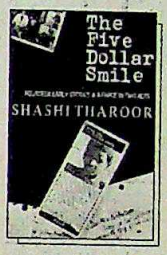
Using the gunny sack as a metaphor for memory, Vassanji has written a great book that captures the essence of an immigrant people, but one baulks at proclaiming him an outstanding new talent. Simply because the biographical note on the book jacket makes Vassanji out to be 86 years old; such a belated flowering could promise little more to come. One can only hope this is a quotidian typographical error on the part of the publishers, and the best of Vassanji still lies ahead.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

Teenage Tales

Early works fail to impress

THE FIVE DOLLAR SMILE
Fourteen Early Stories and a Farce in Two Acts
by SHASHI THAROOR
Viking
Price: Rs 239; Pages: 175



HAD the author been someone like V.S. Naipaul or R.K. Narayan, publishing adolescent outpourings in fiction would have made sense. For instance, it could have enhanced the understanding of the self-contained world of Malgudi that Narayan so vividly crafted in prose or Naipaul in his world of Mr Biswas and Miguel Street in Trinidad.

But Shashi Tharoor's collection of short stories, most of which were published when he was a teenager working in magazines like *JS* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, serve no such purpose. The only novel he has written is *The Great Indian Novel*. It revealed that he is obviously quite a gymnast with words and difficult concepts. The *Mahabharata* in modern dress—or drag—is quite an achievement. Tharoor, who is 34 and works with the United Nations, is clever, even brilliant.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Tharoor: precocious prose

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He's even endowed with that rare quality of humour which is in scarce supply in Indian writing.

Precociousness, however, is not all. The stories—many of them set in Delhi University or villages in his native Kerala—are certainly lively and perceptive. But they do not do justice to the author's later work or potential, riddled as they are with collegiate punning and straining for cleverness. Coffee house punning should remain where it originates—in the coffee house. One-liners and verbal smashes are alright in party talk. But do not a good book make.

Why a publishing house like Viking brought out this assortment of stories is puzzling. It could be symptomatic of the age of gift-wrapped quickie publishing we have entered. Instant noodles, instant fiction.

As for the stories themselves, among the more interesting are *The Solitude of the Short-Story Writer* written while the author was well out of his teens, the title story *The Five Dollar Smile* and *The Village Girl*. The title story cleverly juxtaposes the air journey of the orphan Joseph to meet his "foster parents" in the United States. The story, as the author states in his preface to the story—each story has such introductions—is about emotional and geographical dislocation. It's also a perceptive, ironic look at the world of charity and humanitarian organisations.

In *The Village Girl*, Tharoor shows his sensitivity in the encounter between the "sophisticated" Delhi-Keralite on his obligatory vacation in his village and the wide-eyed girl whose world is circumscribed by the village and hide-bound convention. The story *The Solitude of the Short-Story Writer*—it was first published in London's *New Review*—is an accomplished piece of writing. The author successfully vivisects the mind of a writer who transfers everything from his life—loves, relationships, encounters—to his kiss-and-tell prose.

This collection also includes the farcical play on the Emergency which revolves around the idea of a dog who has been made into a human being. This is biting stuff and very funny indeed. But perhaps the idea has been stretched a bit too far.

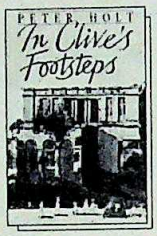
Tharoor could easily be one of India's major writers. But with this latest effort *The Great Indian Novel* has been brought down to The Slight Indian Story.

—MADHU JAIN

Banal Effort

A lacklustre travelogue

IN CLIVE'S FOOTSTEPS
by PETER HOLT
Hutchinson
Price: Rs 345; Pages: 211



A very sensible bit of nonsense verse exists in the form of a clerihew on Robert Clive: "The best thing about Lord Clive is that he's no longer alive. There's a good deal to be said for being dead." Peter Holt is a descendant of the first Englishman to loot India—of the man who became Baron Clive of Plassey for his pains with native nababs. Holt disagrees with the good sense in letting his sleeping forefather lie. His travelogue mixes up a modern-day narrative of personal encounters with a sketchier story on Clive's career.

The book begins with Clive's death in an English mansion. It seems the good lord suffered acute gastric spasms and did himself in by sticking a penknife into his throat. Most historians neglect these pleasant personal details, so our picture of Clive is of the victor of Arcot and Plassey. Holt's interest in the offbeat fact encourages us over the first few pages. But that is about as much as one can say in favour of his book.

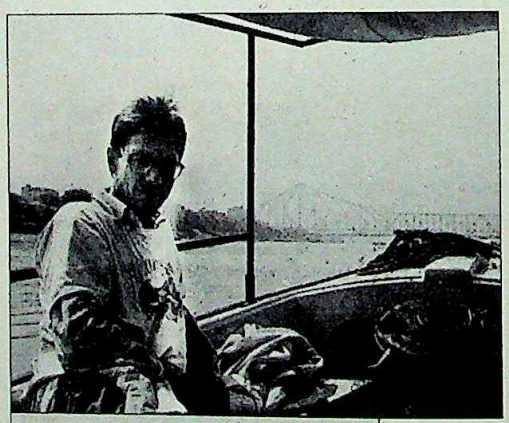
It took Clive 13 months to travel by ship from England to Madras. Holt flies over in a few hours, but is slow within India by comparison with his ancestor's meteorism. He meanders dully for 200 pages in Clive's tracks, starting in Madras and ending in Murshidabad near Plassey. En route he plods feebly through Pondicherry, Salem, Trichi and Calcutta, nothing very little that is sufficiently removed from the banal. His narrative on Clive becomes a basic biographical rehash. His own encounters suggest a middle class European tourist who is pleasantly condescending about the chaos in technologically deprived countries. India charms him not; he is by turns disgusted or uncomfortable or fed up. Only the thought of writing up his own humdrum experiences into something saleable seems to keep him going.

In Madras, Holt meets an unlikely new messiah in a state of imminent nirvana. In Pondicherry, he meets an American playboy nostalgic about buxom blondes. In Calcutta, he hires a cab-driver whose insipid opinions he assiduously sets down as though they were something other than crassly insignificant. About the only striking line in his book is a description of Calcutta as "a city in urgent need of a disaster".

Ever since low fares have made globe-trotting easy, every donkey that treads a common path wants to become a Theroux or a Frater or a Newby or a Bill Aitken. But it takes a lot more than the travelling urge to be a travel writer. *In Clive's Footsteps* is only a pastiche of basic information in unmemorable prose by a writer with a prosaic sensibility on a few Indian towns that are best forgotten.

—RUKUN ADVANI

Peter Holt: prosaic sensibility



EXCERPT

China turned to me. "Okay, baba, so all is fixed. What do you want? Rice-dal, or omelette?"

I looked at the muddy riverbank and did a quick check for dead dogs. It was not a pleasant place for a picnic. "And where, China, are we going to cook an omelette?" I asked.

"We cook on boat." He held up the kerosene cooker.

"No, we bloody don't cook on boat. Not with more than 100 litres of fuel in leaky plastic drums, we don't."

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RAVI BATRA

▲ Devi Lal: the daily darshan

▲ Amritraj: the wonders of Wimbledon

JUSTIN MAGUIRE

▲ Sanjay Kak (second from right): tracking the diaspora

episode—*Des Pardes, Britannia Rules the Waves?*—looks at the second generation British-born "Asian" children coping with the search for identity through the popular arts. Subsequent episodes go from *Sacramento Bibi: Land, Liberty & Family on America's West Coast* to *Chutney Soca, We Thing?: East Indians in West Indian Trinidad*, to the *Big Apple, Zalim Shahar* where they find out among other things 'How does the Indian ride the Bronx?'

◆ SPORTS chairmen seem to be the order of the day on the little screen. After Sunil Gavaskar's swivelling chair and Prakash Padukone's sit-in comes Vijay Amritraj with *Matchpoint*, a series on golden moments of tennis at Wimbledon from 1971 onwards. the serial, produced by Radiant Sports Management, goes on air in February-end. And it's quite glitzy, in keeping with the tennis ace's *Octopussy* image. The credit titles appear with catchy thriller-music, anticipating a Bond round the court and love-alls of a different kind. What is interesting about the series, which Amritraj anchors with panache, are shots of the social aspects of Wimbledon: peaches 'n cream complexioned English lasses eating strawberries and cream, Rolls Royces disgorging the nobility and, of course, great moments of tennis.

—MADHU JAIN

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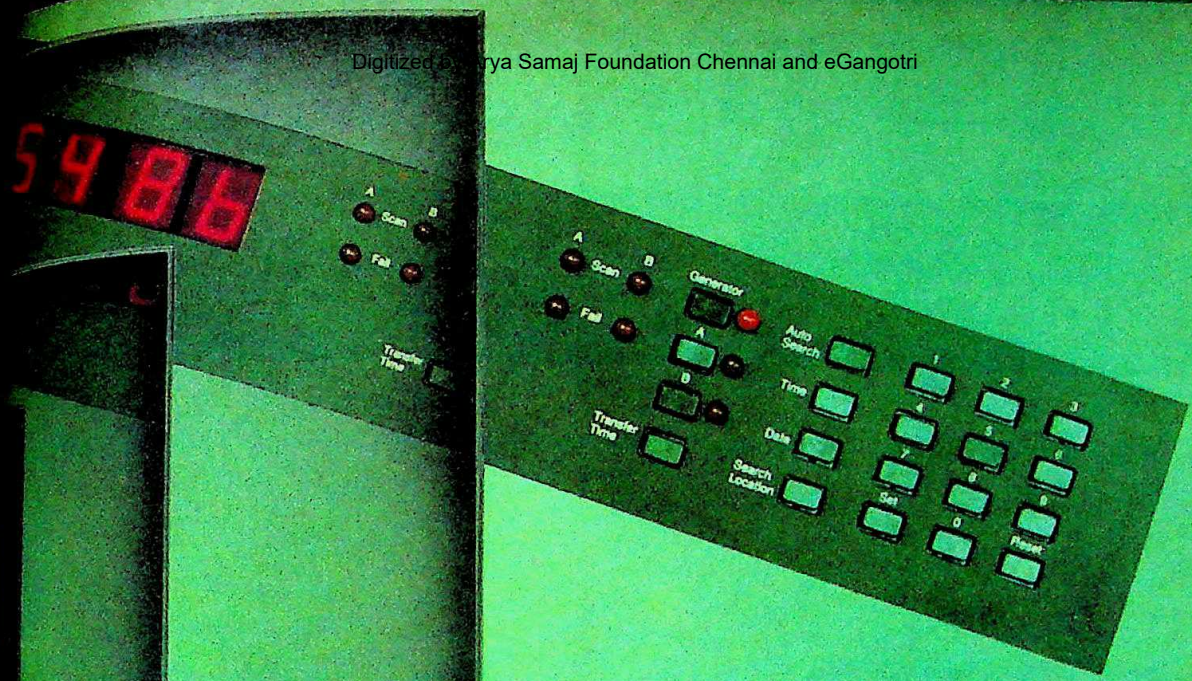

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Rao: crooning glory

Ole, Senorita

◆ What do Barbie Doll and Thums Up have in common? Nothing. Except that their advertisement jingles share a voice: **Suneeta Rao**. Now the crooner, with the hit album *Suneeta Senorita* under her belt, has cut another disc, *Dhuaan* for HMV. In it she uses a fusion of Indian and western sounds to spread an anti-drug message. Says she: "A blend of the East and the West is the pulse of today's generation." Ole, senorita.

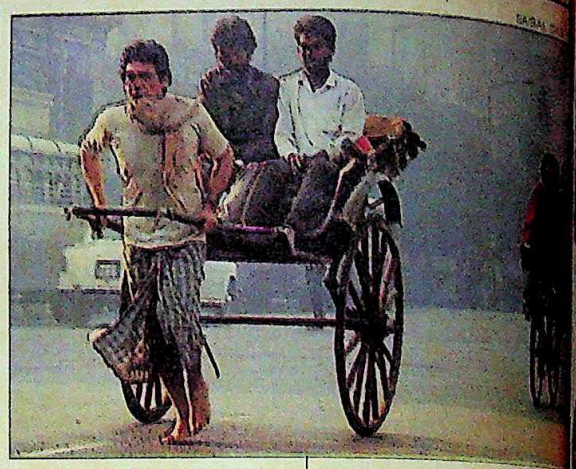
Real Romance

◆ Barely had the umbilical ties come undone when **Kamalahasan** and **Sarika** tied the marital knot. Love, marriage and then babies is the usual order. But the virtuoso actor, who always has a new trick for each film, is an original off screen too. A few months after their second child, Akshaya, was born—their first daughter Sruti is five years old—Kamal and Sarika were officially married in Madras last fortnight with a proud Sivaji Ganesan looking on. "I just formalised a relationship that was already there," says Kamal.

Kamalahasan and Sarika

On the Road

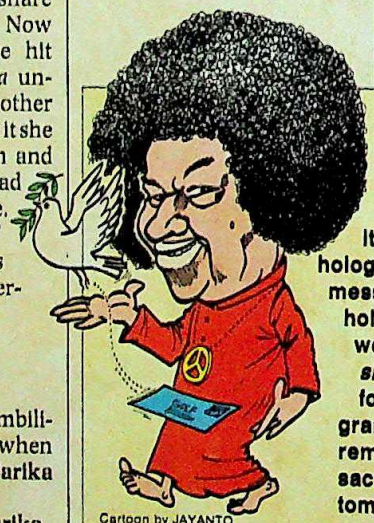
◆ Guess who's pulling your rickshaw? If it's the City of Joy it just may be **Om Puri**. Our very own Robert de Niro has been carrying passengers in Calcutta to get in the right gear for the film *City of Joy* being directed by Roland Jaffe of *Killing Fields* fame. Dressed in a lungi and vest, Puri has been sweating it out—with fake passengers though—for four hours each morning for over two weeks. But he now takes it all in his stride. Says he: "Each day ends in a growing relationship with the people of the street." Carry on, 'Om then.



Om Puri: glorious strides

Holy Hologram

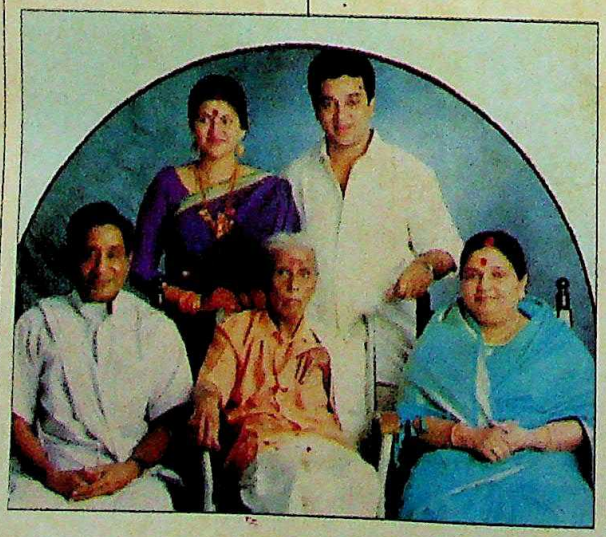
◆ **The Gulf war has triggered Sai Baba's publicity machine into mailing-hologram-letters to spread the message of peace. There's the holy man and behind him the words *sathya, dharma, shanti, prema* and *ahimsa* in four languages. "Our hologram-armour dips its guns in remembrance of all soldiers sacrificing their today for our tomorrow," says the letter.**



Cartoon by JAYANTO

Southern Sojourn

◆ Starlet **Sonam** may have turned her back on the arc lights after her marriage but she's now one, two and threed it over the Deccan in the Telugu film *Kothamma Singam* with Chiranjeevi. Made earlier, the film will be released in Tamil too. Says she: "It's like making a Hindi film. I speak my dialogues in Hindi." The southern leading ladies aren't delighted though. Says Radha, a Tamil actress: "You should perform well too, like Sridevi." Touche. Or sour grapes?



Sonam and Chiranjeevi

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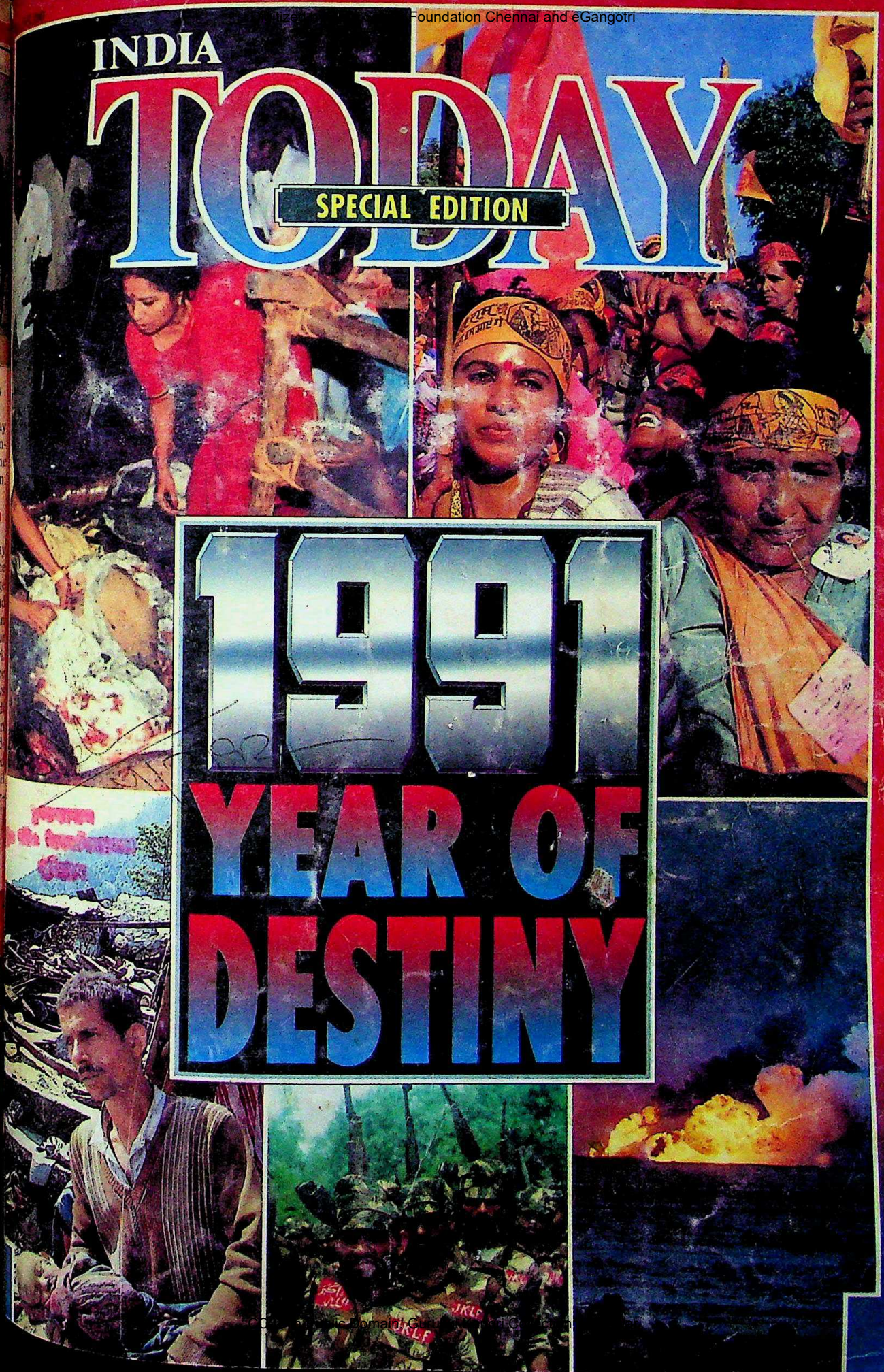
INDIA TODAY

SPECIAL EDITION

1991 YEAR OF DESTINY



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Aqua Pura
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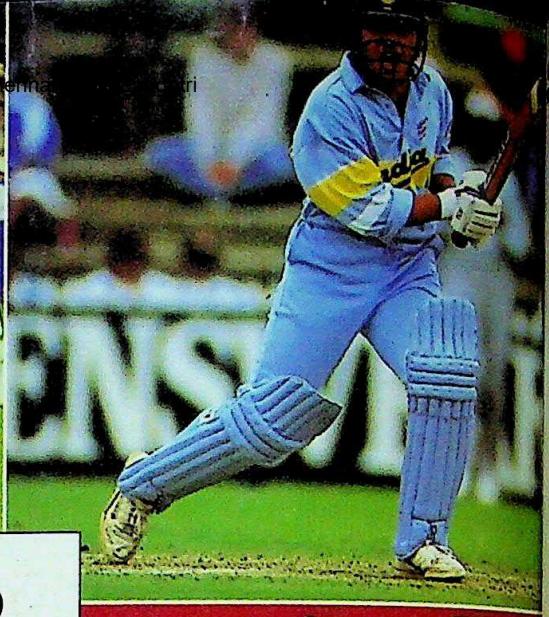

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(From left) Dutta, Mandal, Bobb, Purie, Dutta Gupta, Joshua

THE passage of time tends to blunt the edges of memory and distort the deeper significance of the past. But history is essentially a chain reaction, one event leading to another, one pebble setting off an avalanche. It is this subtle symbiosis of time and space which is often missed in the ceaseless pace of modern existence. This is the gap this special edition, to be brought out at the end of every year, intends to fill; as a reminder of the past and a message for the future. The basic idea has been to distill the coverage of our reporters on particular subjects and trends over the year and present it as a package which is a comprehensive and memorable record of the year gone by.

Indeed, there could not have been a better year to start such a project. The Gulf War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and domestically the tragic assassination of Rajiv Gandhi followed by a government which has ushered in far-reaching economic changes. In fact, it has been a year of irreversible change. And in order to do justice to it, we did not condense articles already written in INDIA TODAY *during the year, but looked at the year afresh in words and pictures.*

The project was handled by Deputy Editor DILIP BOBB. *In spite of being a man of few words, Bobb is a prolific and stylish writer. As he sits at his computer keyboard, one is always reminded of a virtuoso concert pianist, churning out sweet music for the magazine. This issue has tested his considerable talent. He first pored over past issues of the magazine and reams of other research material to get a flavour of the year. And then he single-handedly wrote the approximately 45,000 words in this edition. All in a matter of five weeks. Says Bobb: "This has been one of the most taxing assignments I've done for* INDIA TODAY. *It was like writing a book in fast forward."*

But that was only half the story. We needed pictures to match the words and pages to be designed. The formatting of the issue was conceived by Art Editor SHIRLEY JOSHUA, *working in creative conjunction with Art Director* PRANAB DUTTA, *Assistant Art Director* PEALI DUTTA GUPTA *and Senior Visualiser* PRABAL MANDAL. *Says Joshua: "The annual provides the art department a much wider canvas to play with and we all enjoy that." I hope you too enjoy the fruits of our labour. It was an unforgettable year and we hope this edition will keep it so for you.*

(Aroon Purie)

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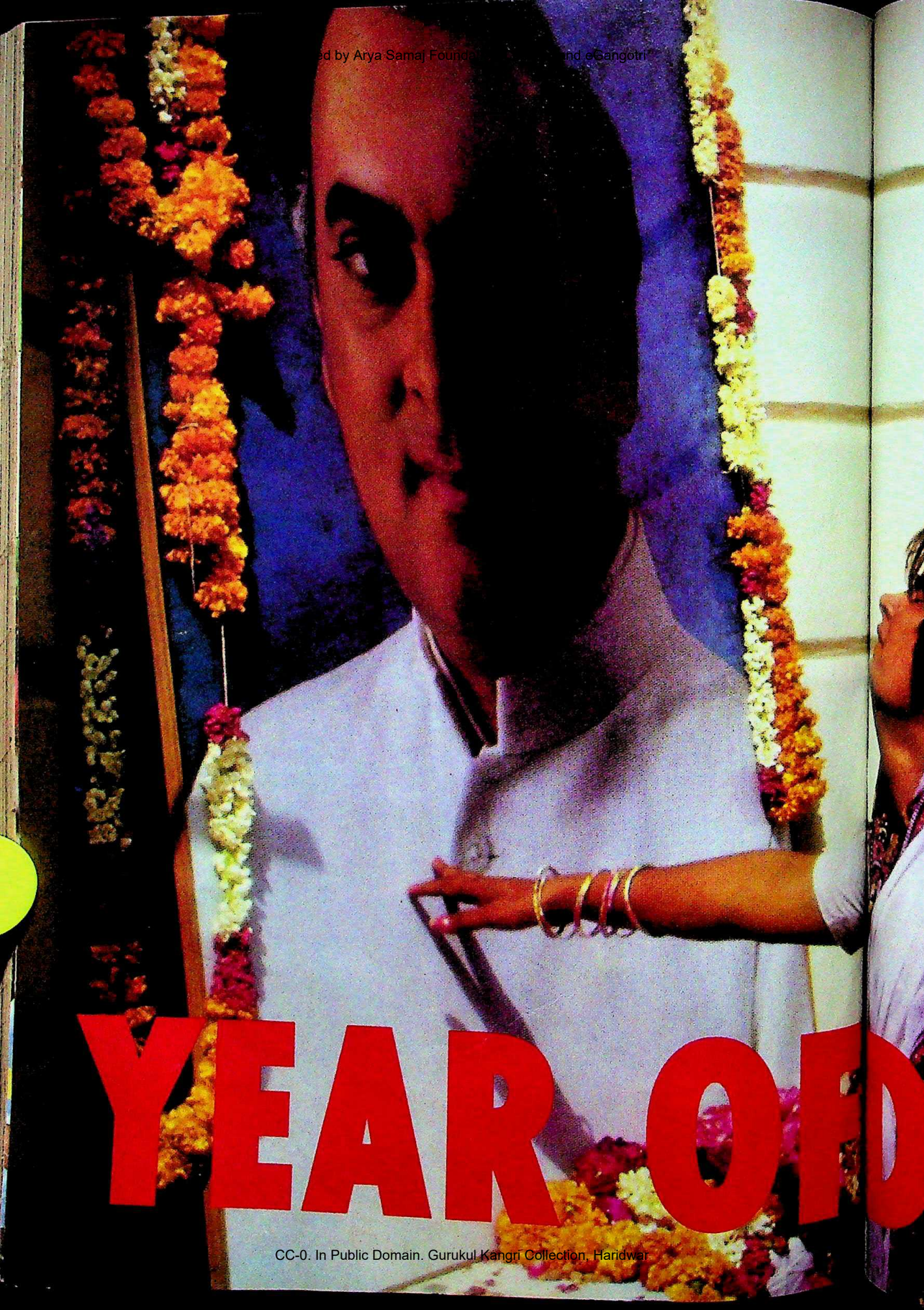

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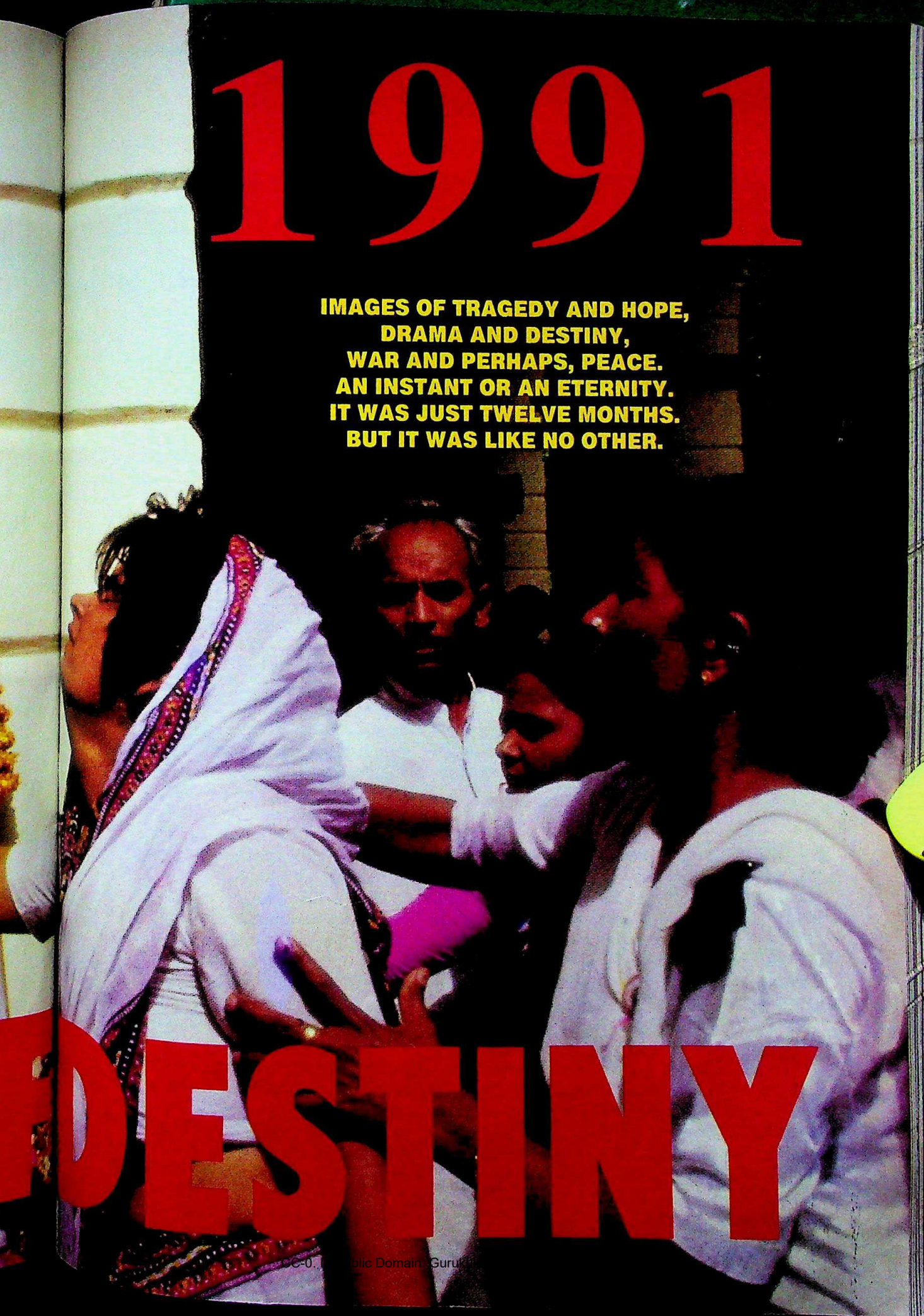
1991

IMAGES OF TRAGEDY AND HOPE,
DRAMA AND DESTINY,
WAR AND PERHAPS, PEACE.
AN INSTANT OR AN ETERNITY.
IT WAS JUST TWELVE MONTHS.
BUT IT WAS LIKE NO OTHER.



DESTINY

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A wink of tragedy's eye and the course of history altered forever. A widow's unbearable grief transformed into courage, dignity and the admiration of a nation. A torch passed from the young to the old and yet, a new beginning. A muffling of the ominous drumbeat of violence. And, a man of advancing years entrusted with an awesome responsibility.

In the end, those were the dominant images of 1991, a year that shaped India's destiny more forcefully than any other. Looking back, it seems unbelievable that so much of significance was crammed into the year—the assassination of a former prime minister, a divisive general election, an economic crunch that led to a major devaluation of the rupee and the third minority government in a span of two years.

Hope and anxiety battled for supremacy in the year 1991 and in the end, anxiety won. A year of living dangerously had finally taken its toll and the future seemed even more forbidding than the past. Punjab, Assam, Kashmir. Mandal and masjid. Political and economic instability. Devi Lal and Chautala. The politics of opportunism. Communal carnage. Minority governments.

India's cascade of chaos appeared unending. More alarming, political bankruptcy had gone hand-in-hand with economic disaster. The implications were fatal. For the first time, the country's destiny seemed in dubious disarray.

TALE OF TWO PRIME MINISTERS

CHANDRA Shekhar was clearly no answer. By the time 1991 dawned, the bearded 'Baba of Bhondsi' had completed 40 days in covetous office. But whether he could last another 40 days was in serious doubt. His outspokenness about the limitations of his government ("Nobody should expect miracles") and even his own ("I know very little about foreign affairs and am not much interested"), proved the point. With just 54 members of Parliament, his was "a government on daily wages" as BJP leader L.K. Advani caustically termed it, hostage to the whims of the Congress(I), now increasingly uncomfortable without the trappings of power.

Political insecurity, viewed against the backdrop of 16 months of chaos, communal tension and two minority governments, was now in alarming ascendancy. The uneasy truce between Rajiv and Chandra Shekhar—between a man who had no business being prime minister and another who thought he should be—ensured the Government's survival hung in delicate balance. Which is why Rajiv Gandhi's January 2 statement that the "Congress(I) will ensure that the Government doesn't fall," found few buyers.

Already, the looming threat of war in the Gulf over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was revealing the rifts. The human tragedy being enacted in the desert sands with a turbulent river of refugees fleeing the area before the United Nations deadline of January 15 for Saddam Husain to pull out of Kuwait, had exposed India's diplomatic isolation. More important, it caused sharp political differences in the domestic arena.

WAR AND A WIDENING GULF

CNN's dramatic debut in India gave the country a ringside view of the menacing build-up in the Gulf. It was not just the plight of the refugees but the threat of the massive destruction that seemed inevitable when "the mother of all battles", as Saddam immortalised it, edged dangerously closer to its denouement. When Operation Desert Storm finally broke, at midnight on January 16, it eventually overshadowed the domestic crisis which was threatening the collapse of yet another government. India, like the rest of the world, was a country on hold, held collective hostage to the riveting drama being played out in the desert sands as the first major international conflict to be televised live beamed shell-by-shell action directly into the living-room.

The media revelations in late-January about New Delhi's permission for Gulf-bound US aircraft to refuel in India only restored domestic reality to its rightful place of prominence. The Congress(I) joined in the volley of protests from political quarters even as Chandra Shekhar airily dismissed the decision as "a routine matter". But the end was clearly nigh. On being asked if the stability of his government was under threat, the prime minister snapped: "I am no astrologer." But astrology was no longer needed. Having conspired in the collapse of one government, Chandra Shekhar was finding the irony inescapable. In a letter to the prime minister on January 19, Rajiv

Rajiv, Chandra Shekhar and a torrid honeymoon

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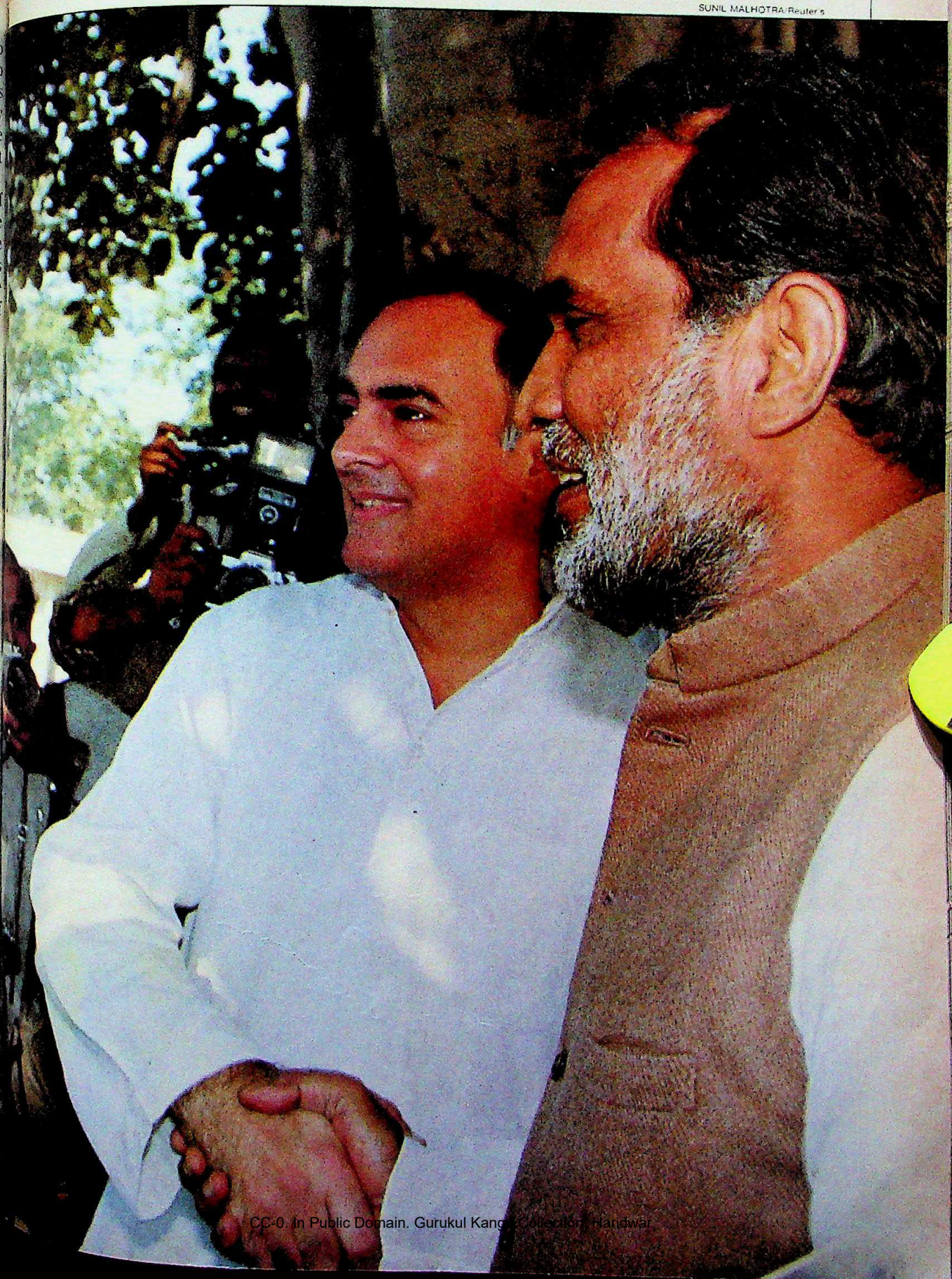
They made the oddest of political bedfellows, one a prime minister -waiting, the other who had no legitimate business being one.

SUNIL MALHOTRA/Reuters



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accused the Chandra Shekhar government of being "reduced to helpless spectators" in the Middle East crisis, and what he claimed was "no clear articulation of our national interests."

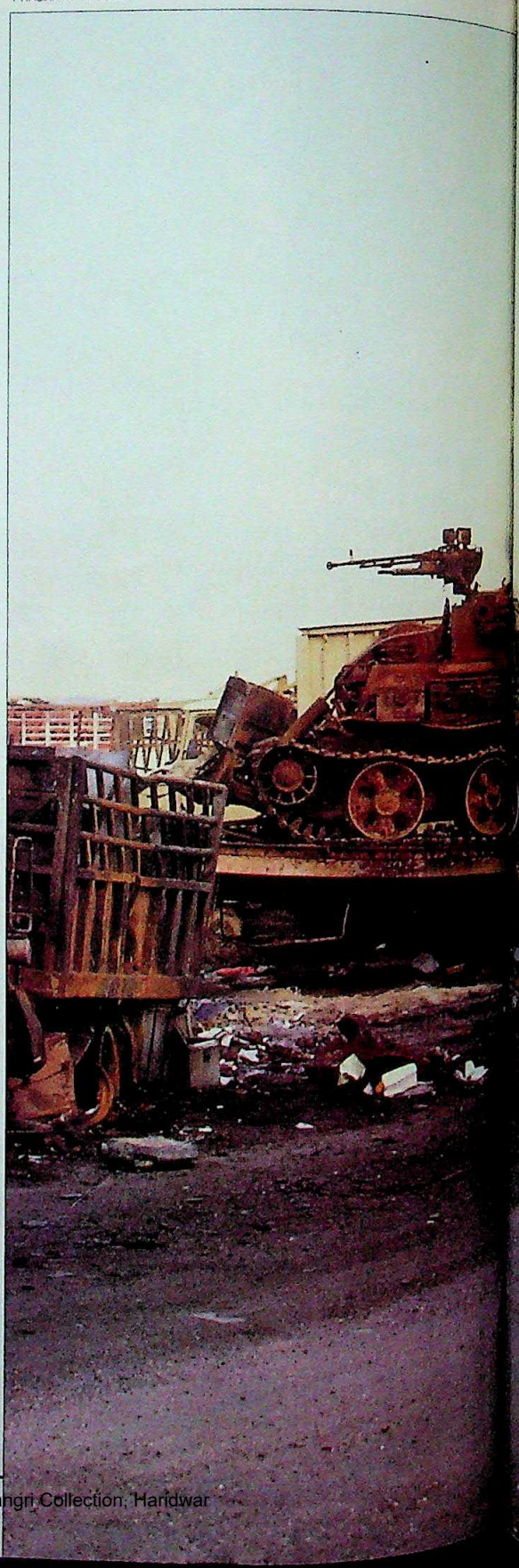
That Rajiv's sudden belligerence was more to do with political gamesmanship than patriotic priorities was evident. Rajiv had just completed a bungled attempt to play a Lone Ranger-type peace role to end the Gulf War by air-dashing to Moscow and Teheran on February 24. Chandra Shekhar's barbed criticism of Rajiv's bungled effort—"There is a saying—Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. I was not willing to do that"—indicated that the hostility was becoming mutual. In fact, the Gulf War had ended without Rajiv's help and only because Saddam's much-vaunted army caved in meekly to the allied onslaught on February 27, after just 42 days of a one-sided battle. By end-February, the domestic crisis was coming to a head. Finance minister Yashwant Sinha's inability to present the annual budget sharply underlined the country's alarming economic instability.

TWO CONSTABLES AND CHAOS

NOW, two lowly constables were to expose the fig leaf of political stability. On March 3, the arrest of two Haryana policemen loitering outside 10 Janpath, Rajiv Gandhi's residence, triggered the collapse of the Chandra Shekhar government. Whether the conspiratorial Om Prakash Chautala was behind the clumsy surveillance on Janpath proved immaterial. The insignificance of the issue and Rajiv's reluctance to immediately withdraw support exposed the opportunism of the day. The Congress(I) leadership was clearly playing for time, hoping to attract enough defectors to form a government without having to face a disillusioned electorate.

That Chandra Shekhar called their bluff by resigning on March 6, thus forcing a snap election nobody wanted, merely extended the lease on political instability. Rajiv insisted that "we never wanted to bring the government down," but the hectic political activity swirling around Rashtrapati Bhavan between March 3 and March 6, during which frantic efforts were being made to avert a mid-term poll, indicated that the electoral die had already been cast. Another

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Iraqi armour destroyed and Saddam surrenders

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The 'Mother of all battles' ends in the Gulf as Saddam's much-vaunted army surrenders, and, in India, a looming political battle is given premature birth.

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A minor political crisis snowballs and triggers off a divisive general election...

government had come and gone.

To Chandra Shekhar's credit, nothing became his office like the leaving of it. His brief stewardship passed without any major caste or communal convulsions, proving that less government provided better governance. But in the broader sense, India's experiment with coalition politics was proving unaffordable. The price was another expensive exercise—the second general election in 16 months, scheduled to be held before June 5.

UNWANTED POLL

THE sudden flurry of election-related activity raised the political stakes to higher levels. Chautala, in typical and indecent haste, engineered his return as Haryana chief minister. Arun Nehru, now sulking in isolation, lashed out at V.P. Singh's propagation of a "personality cult" and the BJP announced that the larger states in the country would be divided into smaller manageable states if it came to power after the elections.

The campaign platforms adopted by the major parties were equally dubious in nature. Having supported a rump government and its shameless hijacking of power without a twinge of political conscience, the Congress(I) was now waving the banner of stability. For V.P. Singh and the National Front, the electoral choice was more obvious—the Mandal mantra and its slogan of social justice coupled with secularism. The target: the backwards and the Muslims. The BJP's electoral card was also face up—the Ayodhya issue and Hindu nationalism. Trailing the field was Chandra Shekhar and his motley Janata Dal(S) with an even more limited electoral plank: his prime ministerial performance.

The choice: Ram, Roti and Rajiv

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...balls and ...election...

...entually to prove more cataclysmic ...n anyone could have imagined.

...s also face ...tionalism. ...ar and his ...ore limited ...formance.

Held under the baleful eye of a controversial ...ection commissioner, T.N. Seshan, the 1991 ...mpaign was showing signs of turning out to be ...most divisive, violent and tension-ridden poll in ...ent memory. The caretaker government decided in April to include Punjab and Assam in the election ambit, a move bitterly opposed by the Congress(I). "It will be a terrorist assembly if elections are held," declared Rajiv. A massive and alarmingly-militant VHP rally in New Delhi on April 4 raised political temperatures even further. And, finally, the date for the poll—20, 23 and 26 May—left the parties short on campaign time and, consequently, long on over-heated rhetoric.

SAIBAL DAS

A DATE WITH DESTINY

THAT the mid-term poll was to prove even more cataclysmic than anyone could have imagined was a sign that India's furies were still in fashion. The high-pitched campaign gave no indication of the bomb that was ticking away in the obscurity of Sriperumbudur, a remote township in Tamil Nadu. Elsewhere, the campaign was reaching a climax. The key leaders had set a scorching pace which matched the summer heat. By May 20, Rajiv had covered an incredible 170 constituencies in 15 states.

Aware, as he confessed on the campaign trail, that "we lost communication with the people", he was now desperately trying to make up for the lost years, of isolation and security-shrouded aloofness. The change was dramatic as he shooed away his security and mingled with the crowds which threatened to engulf him in their enthusiasm. "I campaigned this way before I was prime minister. I'm not prime minister now, so I am campaigning this way again," he said often, brushing aside questions about his

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That elusive Second Chance within sight, Rajiv Gandhi reached out to the people with whom, he confessed, he had lost communication.

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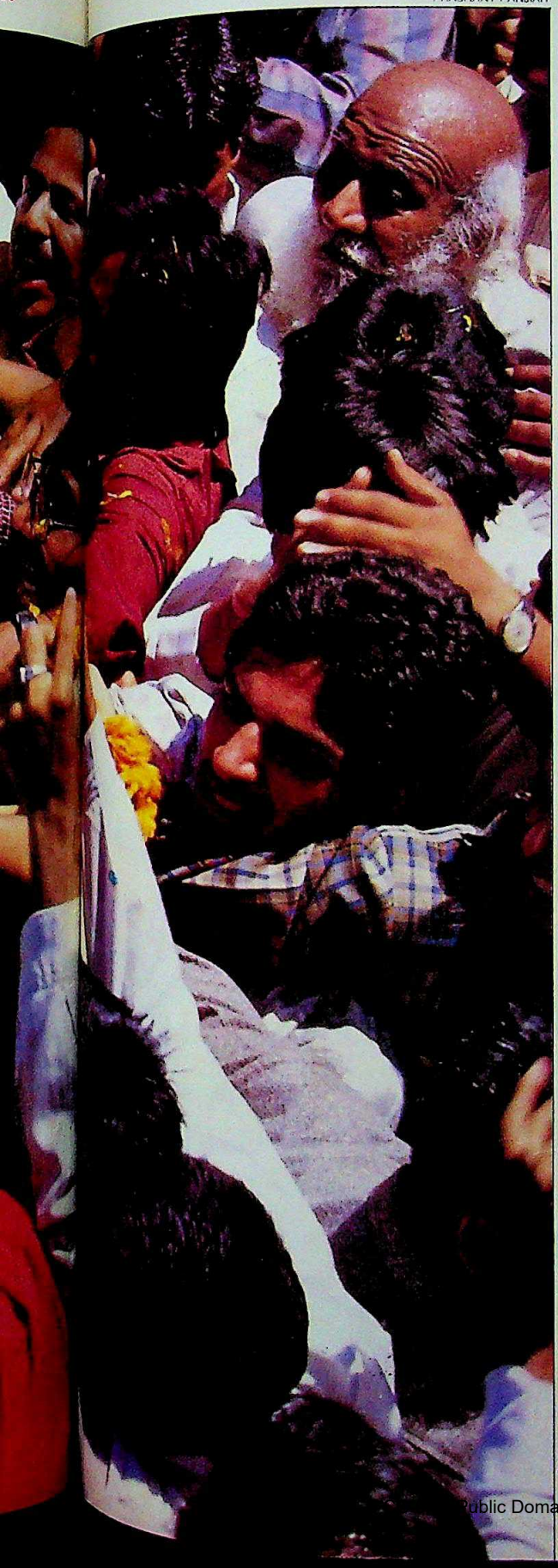
PRASHANT PANJIAR



security. Not since the heady days of 1984-85 had Rajiv worn the look of a winner. The campaign was drawing to a close when Rajiv arrived in Tamil Nadu. Elsewhere in the country, election fever was abating as leaders headed home to recuperate from the rigours of electoral battle and plan post-election strategy. The country, for the second time in two years, nervously awaited the outcome of a contest that had never been more crucial for stability and political sanity.

BUT the madness was about to begin. At the end of a hectic tour of Tamil Nadu, Rajiv reached Sriperumbudur on May 21, running way behind schedule. The people of the state had a special place for Mrs Indira Gandhi's attractive son, just as they had for his assassinated mother. The crowds had waited patiently and many had travelled miles to be there, to hear him and, if lucky enough, to touch him as he passed. It was 10 p.m. at night and the makeshift lights cast an eerie glow over what had become a familiar routine—the convoy of cars pulling up in a cloud of dust and a mad dash to the podium, stopping occasionally to accept garlands and shake outstretched hands.

No one really knew till much later what happened and how it happened. In the crowds and the chaos, the sudden explosion was at first mistaken for a car backfiring or a cracker burst by an over-enthusiastic supporter. Reality dawned with the hysterical screams and the bits of bloodied flesh that suddenly fell on the crowds. "It all seemed to happen in slow motion," a Rajiv aide was to recall later. Somehow, the unreality of the situation—an assassination in Tamil Nadu, considered safe in security terms, surrounded by hysterically devoted supporters and in sight of electoral victory—numbed the country to the real enormity of the tragedy.

The assassination, instant, gruesome, unexpected, was potentially an even greater shock to the system than his mother's had been. In October 1984, only one state, Punjab, was in turmoil. Politically and economically, India was relatively stable and a young heir had already been groomed for dynastic succession. The May 1991 scenario was depressingly different. The country had been plagued by 16 months of political instability and

Rajiv campaigning: the look of a winner

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economic mismanagement. Three sensitive border states were under the terrorist gun and communal and casteist passions had risen dangerously high. Coming as it did, in the middle of a snap poll, Rajiv's murder by a totally unforeseeable source—the LTTE—pushed India to the edge of the precipice.

A FITTING FAREWELL

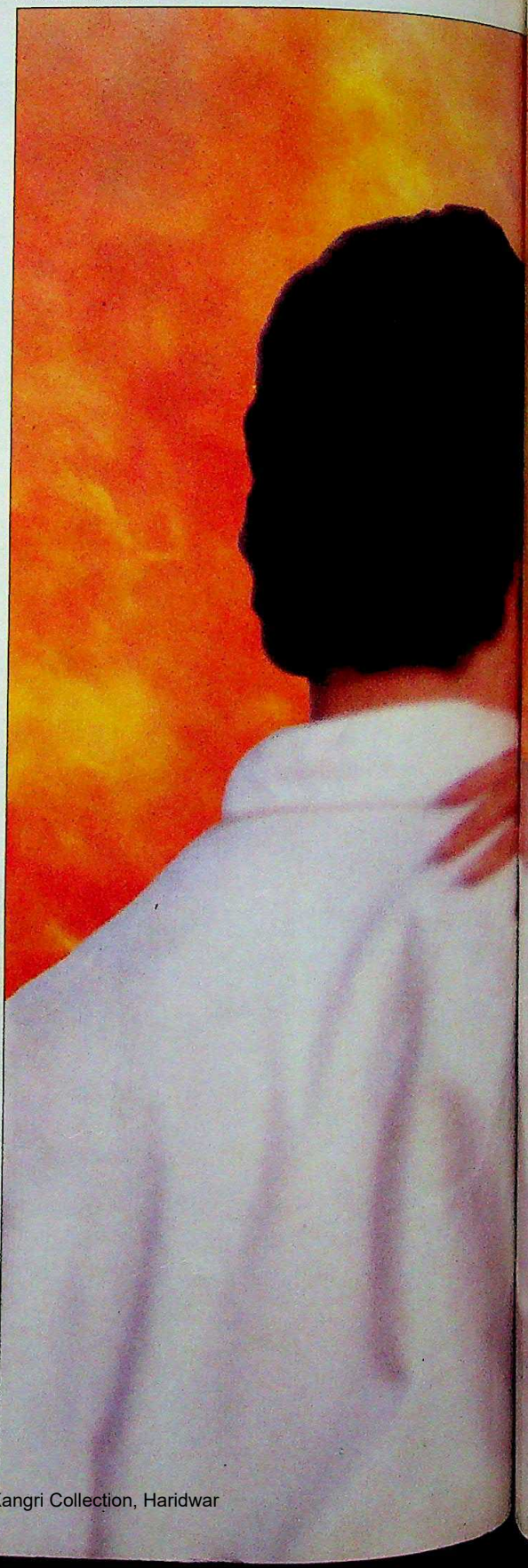
IN death, much more than in life, Rajiv finally found what he had desperately searched for on that lonely campaign trail—a groundswell of love and respect from his countrymen. The spontaneous outpourings of grief and regret were genuine enough, a fitting salute to a leader who had fallen from public grace and emerged the better for it, more humble, more human and more like the Rajiv of old. That he should have been cut down at that particular moment was cruel tragedy but it also succeeded in lighting up his legacy with a luminosity that seemed to have been lost forever.

It also, in the poignancy of the funeral rites, revealed the quality that set him apart from every other leader in the country—the enviable international stature he had acquired. Most of the world leaders gathered near Raj Ghat had not merely flown in in ritualistic obligation. They had come to pay their final respects to a man whose standing on the international stage was unquestionable and whose personality, warmth and dynamism had won admiration and friends across the globe.

For the grief-struck widow and his two children, it was a tragedy made greater by the closeness and love they had shared. Rajiv was the centre of their lives—protector, friend, father, provider, husband and guide. He had shielded them from the unwanted glare of publicity. With his removal from the scene, it fell on them with a sudden harshness that only heightened the hugeness of their loss. That they performed their public role with dignity and courage was as much a tribute to their own character as it was to the man who had moulded it. But for Sonia, more than the children, the role was clearly going to prove even more challenging.

The pressure on her was beginning to mount with remorseless inevitability. The country was poised at a confusing crossroad. An era had ended and another was struggling to its feet. India's

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Rahul, Sonia and Priyanka: profiles in courage

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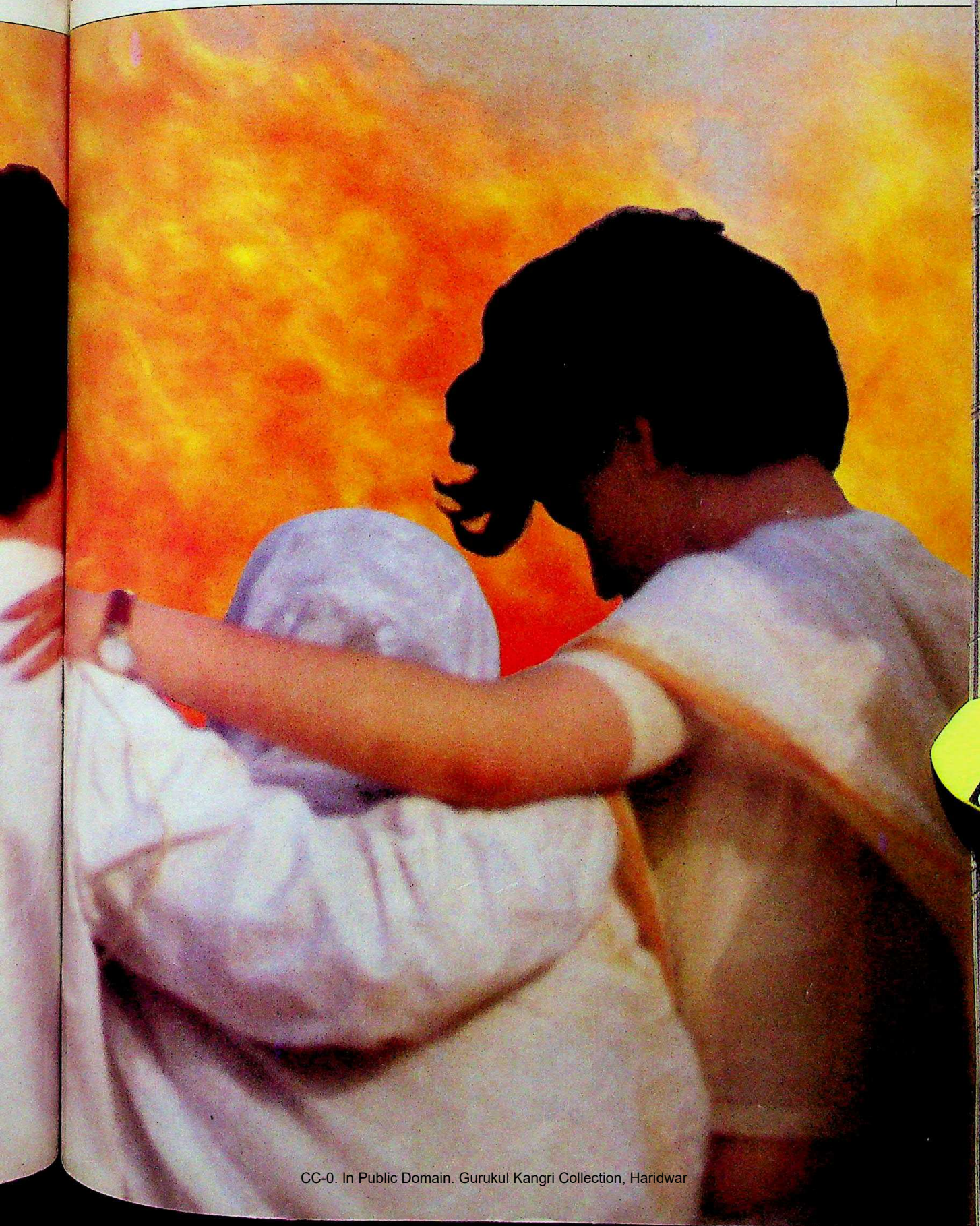
The death of a dynasty, an enormous political vacuum and a recently bereaved widow becomes the focus of intrigue and unseemly palace politics.



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dynastic destiny had finally and tragically ended. The resulting political vacuum left India in dangerous limbo. In Kashmir, pro-Pakistan militants were gaining the upper hand and a succession of foreign policy blunders had isolated the country from the outside world. Now, the future of 850 million people rested on the outcome of an interrupted election and the succession battle within an orphaned Congress party. Both were to prove anticlimactic.

SUCCESSION SHENANIGANS

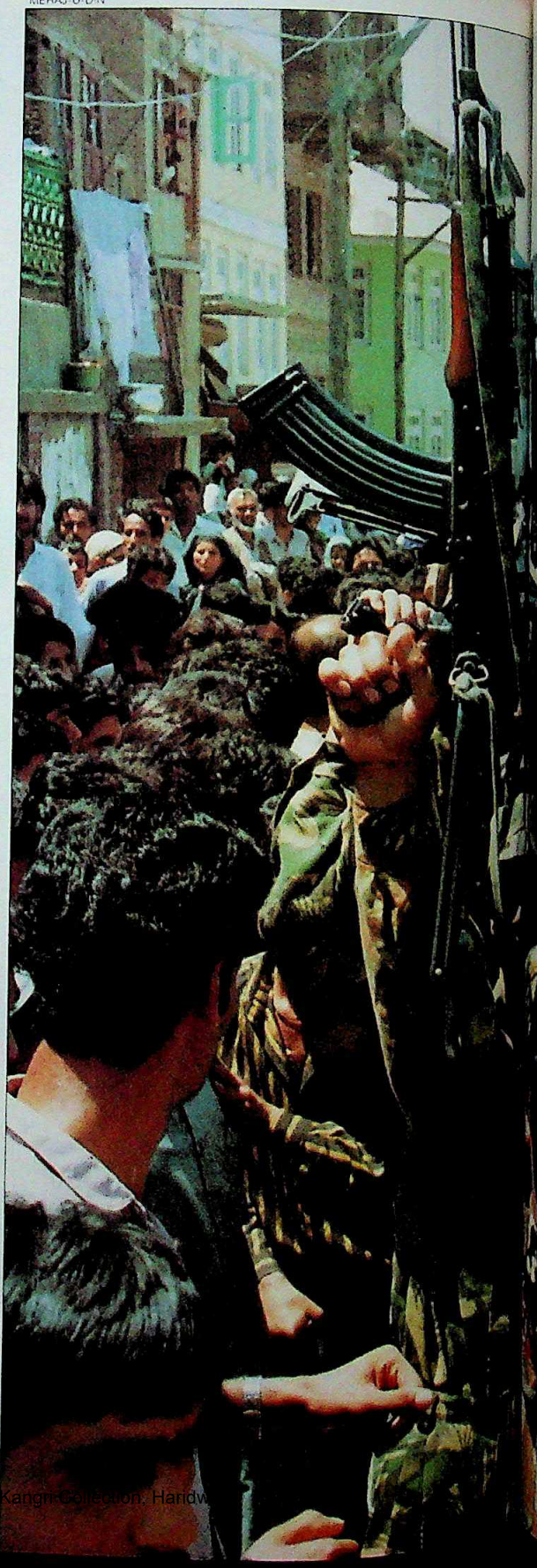
RAJIV'S political orphans, led by the ubiquitous R.K. Dhawan, had turned the succession battle into a theatre of the absurd. But their attempts to foist an unwilling Sonia, still numbed by grief and shock, into leadership of the Congress(I), created a peculiar if poignant crisis for the party. Conditioned by the culture of sycophancy, the draft-Sonia crusade quickly gained ground with nobody daring to oppose it.

One man did, indirectly, and with uncharacteristic forcefulness. "Where is the dynasty line in the Congress(I)?" he asked in early June with the leadership issue still unresolved. "Who elected Indira Gandhi? Who elected Rajiv Gandhi? Is it not the people of India who brought Rajiv to power?" The truth of that statement was somewhat obscured by the identity of the individual, a man who seemed destined for a permanent role as second fiddle—P.V. Narasimha Rao. But with Sonia maintaining a stoic silence, the colourless Narasimha Rao was increasingly emerging as a possible contender for leadership of the party. And, if a sympathy wave affected the second stage of polling in June, perhaps the next prime minister of India.

In the end, the sympathy factor was nowhere near the intensity of the post-Indira 1984 elections but it gave the leaderless Congress(I) 225 seats, a marginal rise from its 1989 tally of 197, but enough to form a minority government. The biggest gainer was the BJP which doubled its votes percentage and grabbed 119 seats, a phenomenal change from the beggarly two seats it held before the 1989 elections. V.P. Singh's Janata Dal, expectedly, limped home a distant third, having lost a large chunk of backward and Muslim votes to the Congress(I).

Now, everything hinged around the leadership question in the Congress(I). Two weeks earlier,

MERAJ-U-DIN



Defiance in Srinagar but divisions within

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Guns and plenty of gore, but equally, terrorism showed signs of desperation and disarray as local support dwindles and factional rivalry erupts.

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A minority government, a leadership in doub and an economic crisis that threatened...

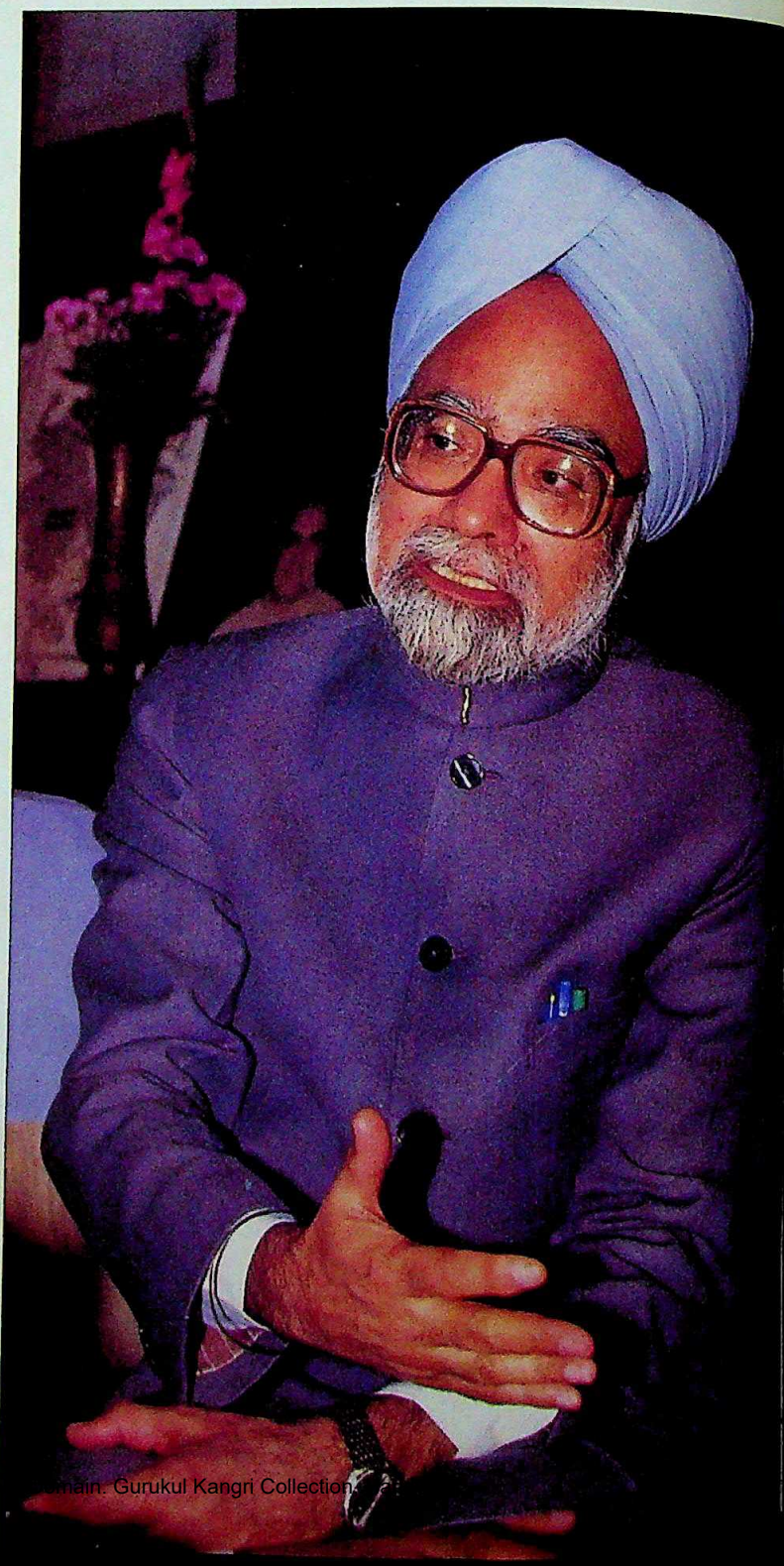
it had appeared that nothing stood between Maharashtra strongman Sharad Pawar and the prime minister's chair. With powerful backing, politically and financially, and his own overweening ambition, Pawar had been the frontrunner in the race. What spoiled his gameplan was, ironically enough, the so-called coterie who had strategically switched their backing to Narasimha Rao on the presumption that he would be their puppet.

The strategy worked—after a fashion. At the June 20 meeting in the Central Hall of Parliament, the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party, dominated by southern MPs, opted to elect a stolid septuagenarian, a man with a reputation of being a follower, not a leader. A politician with no mass base, without even a constituency to call his own.

P.V. Narasimha Rao, frail and on the verge of retiring from political life to pen his memoirs, was, one day later, sworn in as prime minister. He himself had no illusions about his ascendancy. "The prime ministership," he solemnly declared, "is something which has come for reasons which nobody could have imagined, out of an event which no one could have anticipated." What nobody could have anticipated was the performance of Narasimha Rao himself. He may have been Mr Compromise. But he was also, as it turned out, Mr Surprise.

GOLD AND GLASNOST

THOUGH riding hard on a minority government and initially dismissed as a puppet, the 70-year-old, quintessential party hack was to prove the man of the moment. Displaying uncharacteristic skill and sagacity, India's new-old prime minister quickly put an end to the political culture in fashion: of omnipotent coteries, preening courtiers and conflicting cabals.



SHARAD SAXENA

Manmohan Singh, Narasimha Rao: a tricky balancing act

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stop the country in its tracks. Insecurity sway and India edged closer to the brink.

ough his cabinet was largely uninspiring—"old e in old bottles" as the Janata Dal's Jaipal Reddy scribed it—Narasimha Rao was playing a tricky ncing act and with surprising success. The mous coterie was given innocuous berths while Pawar, after a day of drama and suspense, tamely accepted an offer he couldn't refuse—minister of defence.

Trapped in a political and economic time warp, the situation clearly demanded radical responses. With Rajiv's orphans neutralised by Sonia's refusal to become a political pawnbroker, untangling the economic mess was the single greatest challenge to confront India's leadership in recent years.

BHAWAN SINGH

THE irony was inescapable. What Rajiv—young, dynamic, and modern-minded—had tried and failed in was now being asked of the gerontocracy at the helm. There was, however, one crucial difference. India had a prime minister who had not only inherited the job by circumstance but was in the sunset of his political career. In going for broke and ignoring the shibboleths that had scuttled reform in the past, he had nothing to lose and much to gain—most pressingly, an honourable mention in history. As Congress leader V.N. Gadgil remarked: "In the present situation, we do not need a glamour man but a sound man."

Moreover, the man entrusted with initiating economic glasnost, the genial Manmohan Singh, was a non-politician by nature and background. As occupant of the hottest seat in town, Singh had limited options and even less time. India's international credit rating had hit rock bottom as had its foreign exchange reserves. External and domestic debt had snowballed to disastrous levels and imports outpaced exports by a huge margin. The seriousness of the situation was brought home in

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A confrontation between two chief ministers turns bloody, but one has to lose

dramatic fashion when media revelations established the unimaginable—the surreptitious sale in July of a large chunk of India's gold reserves, almost 80 tonnes. The jingoistic protests from opposition benches was expected but it also reflected the accuracy of TISCO Chairman Russi Mody's remark that "the country is literally and honestly broke." The Government's hasty clarifications that the gold had only been pledged against hard currency failed to dampen the stirrings of panic.

Singh took the flak but also took the only way out. "I have the prime minister's mandate to think big," he declared while exploding his Big Bang—a budget aimed at burying one of India's holiest cows: Nehruvian economic legacy, most notably, the licence-permit raj. Singh's July 24 industrial policy had already given notice of the moves towards liberalisation and decontrol. Now, the budget presented a few days later and already five months behind schedule, reinforced that in an explosive manner. A double dose of devaluation provided the first shocks. But more were to follow.

WALKING A TIGHTROPE

AS economic documents go, the 1991 budget proposals were the most radical in India's history—an extension of the industrial policy which confirmed that the Government meant business. Delicensing, decontrol and allurements to foreign investors sparked the inevitable criticism—status quoists claimed it had been penned by officials of the World Bank and the IMF. The truth was that it was the only freeway in a maze of dead-end streets. Liberalisation was the cornerstone on which rested the shaky foundations of the new economic reform measures.

It was, inevitably, destined to be a long and

SHAYAM TEKWANI

Jayalalitha, Bangarappa: southern storm

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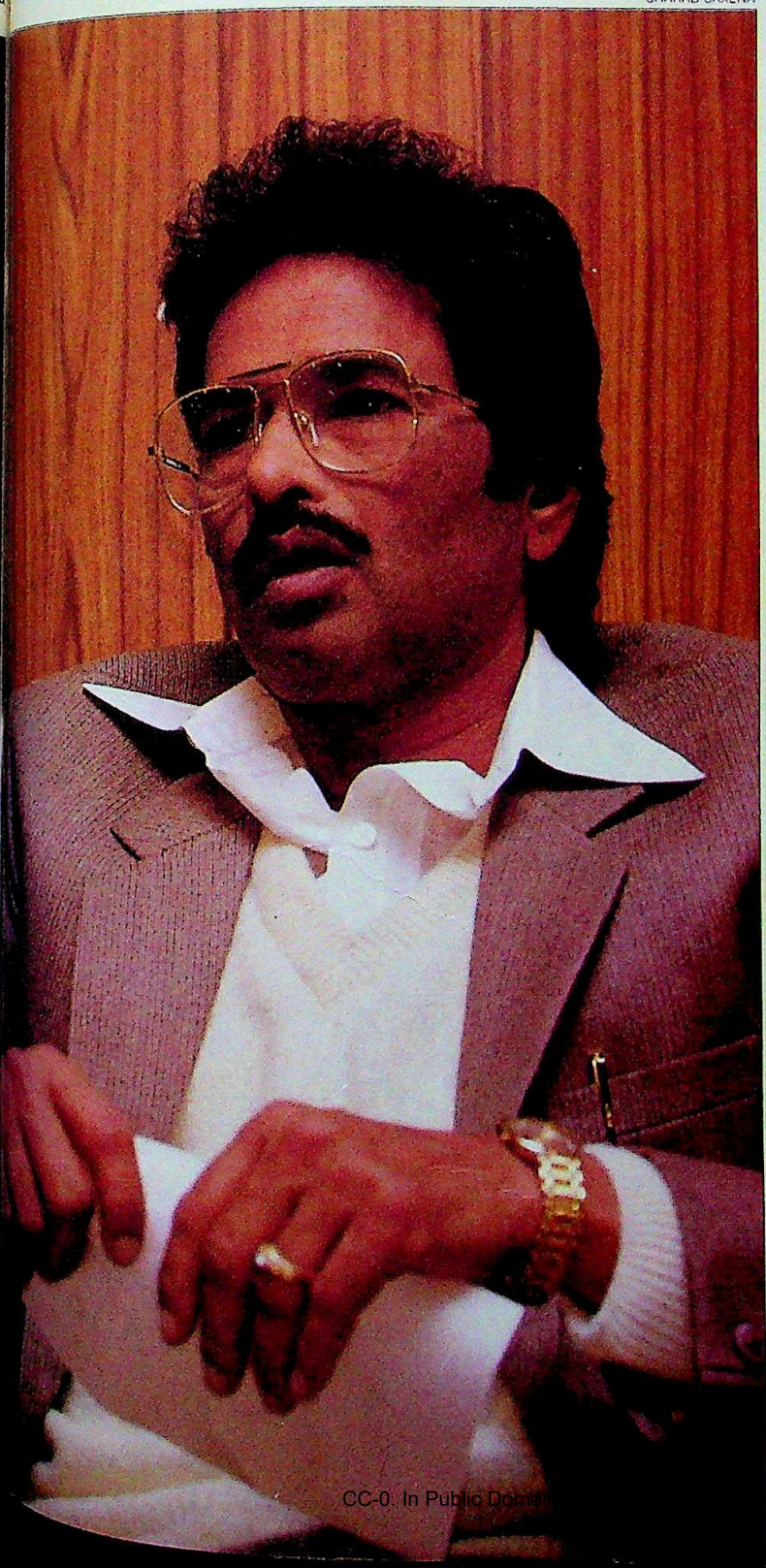
...nd the prime minister is confronted ...h his first major political challenge.

...ficult journey. Despite the flurry of official ...nouncements and the aggressive Manmohan-...idambaram roadshow, nothing much was ex-...cted to change in the hidden bowels of babudom. ...e bureaucratic mind-set ensured that in terms of economic reform, India was still walking a narrow tightrope. But equally, the radical prescription was starting to show results. By early December, the schemes announced to attract foreign exchange remittances had boosted reserves to a healthy-looking Rs 9,000 crore, compared to the situation five months earlier when there was barely enough to finance two weeks imports.

SHARAD SAXENA



BY November, the Government had reclaimed all the gold pledged to foreign banks and the country's credit rating was back to earlier levels, a sign that investors and foreign governments were looking favourably once again at India's economic viability. The year-end schemes announced to trim government fat reinforced the belief that the Government's commitment to economic reform was not mere lip service. But domestically, rising prices, the credit crunch and a crimp on savings made it obvious that there could be no gain without pain. The key, of course, is stability. Despite some success in the November by-elections, the Government remained tantalisingly short of a parliamentary majority.

The snowballing crisis over the Cauvery river dispute added unexpected turbulence to the largely placid political waters. By December, the confrontation between Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha, and her counterpart in Karnataka, the controversial S. Bangarappa, had assumed serious proportions and led to unprecedented riots and the unusual sight of refugees fleeing across state borders. For Prime Minister Rao, it was his first major political challenge. His handling of the crisis will clearly set the

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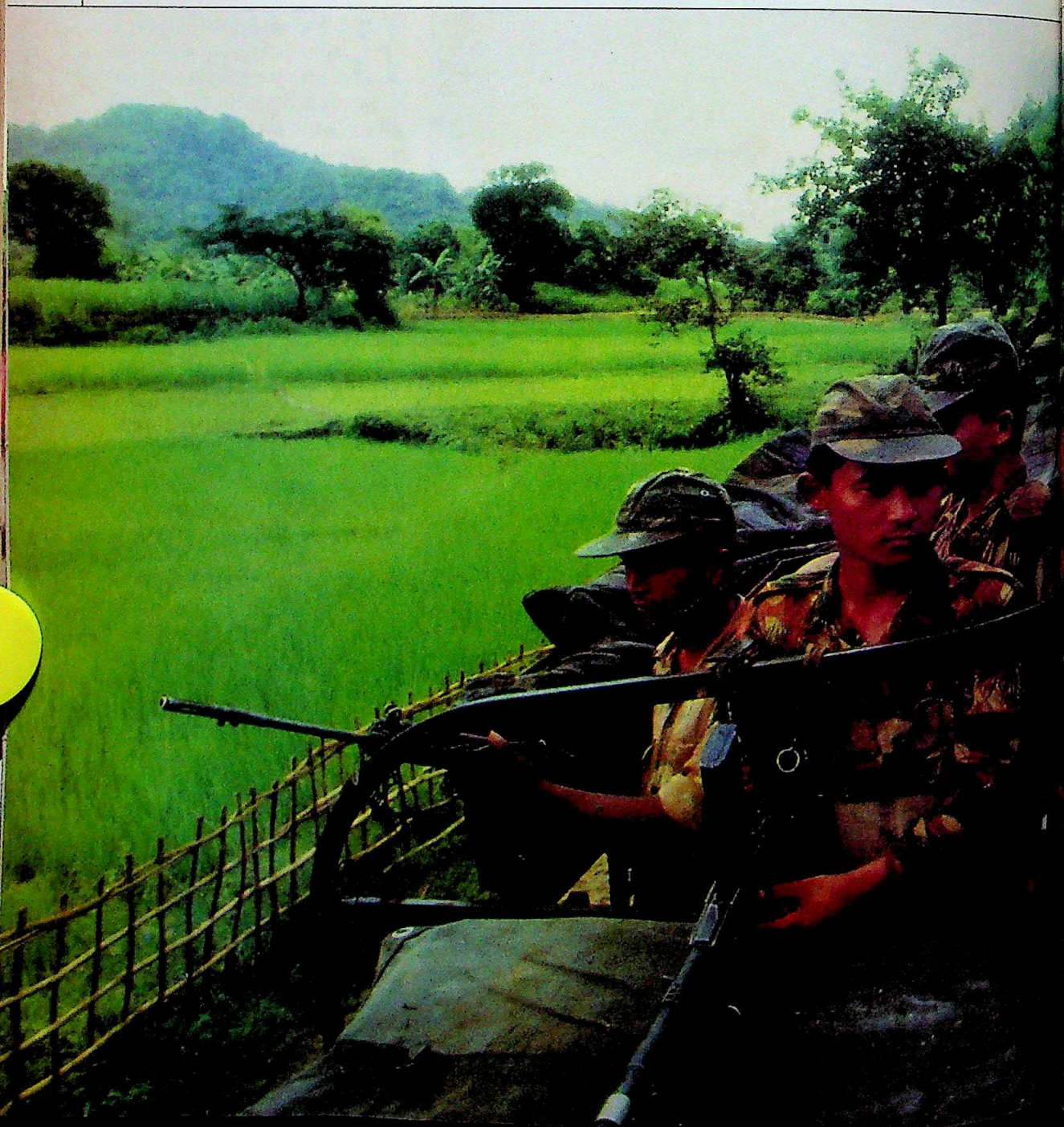
A year of destiny ends with optimism emerging on the horizon....

agenda for the remainder of his tenure.

However, for all the bad tidings, the stirrings of a new optimism were clearly in evidence. A hesitant hope that India's furies were weary of their war. Narasimha Rao himself has emerged from the dwarfing shadow cast by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. In a remarkably short span of time, he has established himself as a leader in his own right, commanding respect and, more crucial, restraint. He has, by virtue of experience and maturity, lowered the political temperature and ushered in a sense of comparative tranquillity. His low-key, avuncular style has brought in a sobering influence, much needed in an era when hysteria and hype were in dangerous ascendancy.

But equally sobering is the fact that the woods are still lonely, dark and deep, and many mine-fields remain to be negotiated. Punjab, Jammu and

Operation Rhino in Assam: harvest of hope



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hance for peace in Assam and a ring of political temperatures.

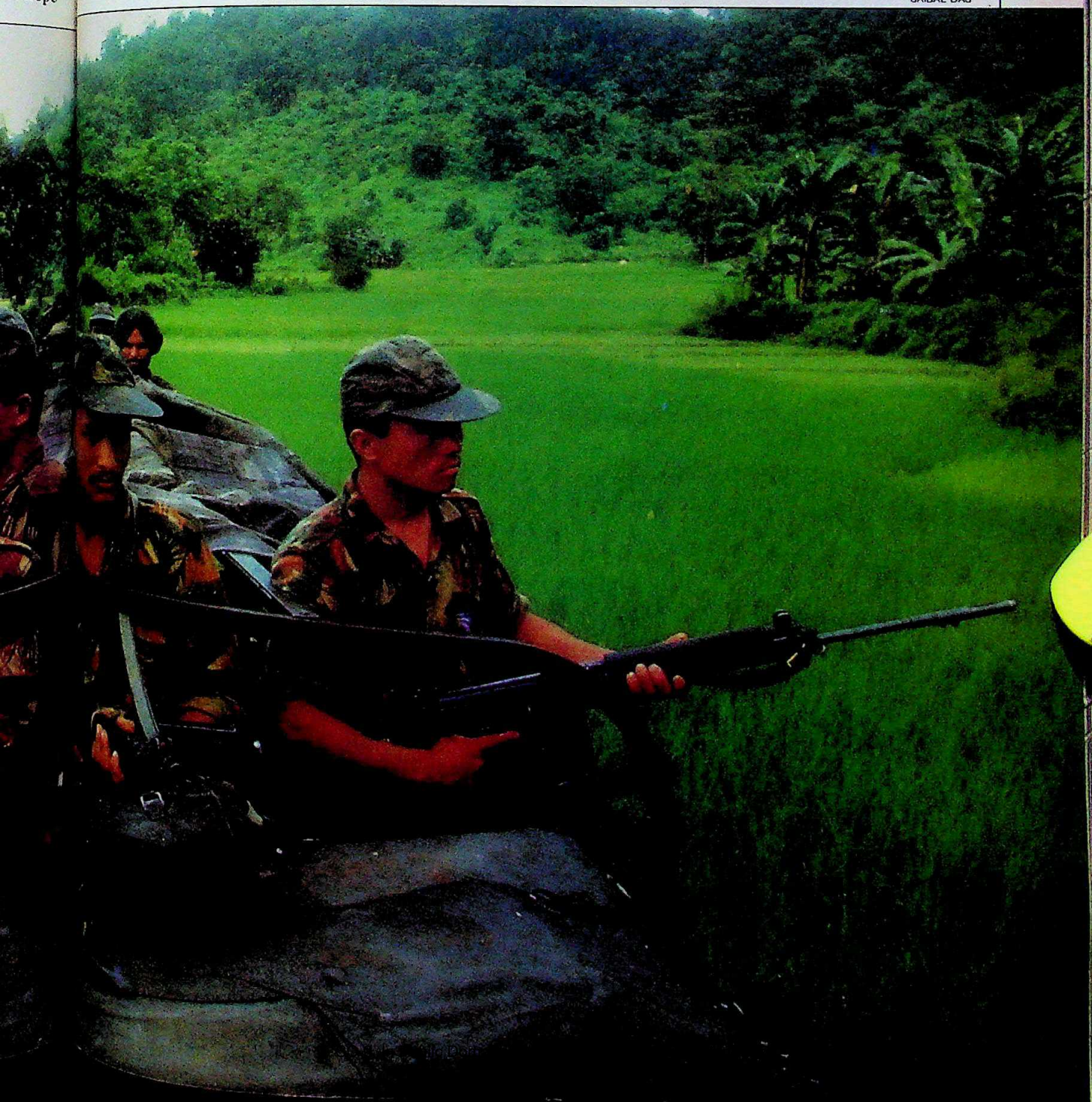
shmir and Assam. Ayodhya. Double-digit infla- n. The Cauvery crisis. Despite the easing of tical and social tensions, the overall mood in country remained one predominantly col- ed by uncertainty and insecurity.

Much of that is, however, a hangover of the t. The political turmoil and social tensions eashed in the latter half of the '80s and the ginning of the new decade destroyed, more than ything else, the country's confidence in itself and its leadership. The end of 1991 left India suspended between two stools—the rusted shackles of the past and the challenge of the future.

Poised as it is, at a decisive crossroad, the coming year will test the country's durability, unity and leadership like no other in recent memory. Change, however daunting, is essentially challenge. How India copes with that challenge will shape the future of generations to come.

—DILIP BOBB

SAIBAL DAS



V★O★I★C★E★S

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★ *I am a man who knows very little about foreign affairs, and am not much interested, but there is some meeting in January.*

◆ CHANDRA SHEKHAR, referring to the Commonwealth Summit

R.K. LAXMAN/The Times of India

★ *The day the press starts talking good of me then you can safely deduce I am a doomed man.*

◆ DEVI LAL

★ *The BJP is spreading religious venom like a drop of lemon juice that spoils the whole milk.*

◆ V.P. SINGH

★ *West Bengal is perhaps the only place where Stalin is still being adored.* ◆ L.K. ADVANI

★ *Why should the RSS help the minority community during communal trouble? They are the ones who create it.*

◆ BHAURAO DEORAS, brother of RSS supremo Balasaheb Deoras

★ *The very fact that a group of 36 MPs is managing the affairs of a country of India's size and that too in a critical situation is a matter of grave concern.*

◆ S.R. BOMMAI, Janata Dal president

★ *I am just a simple political worker. How can I understand them (the Congress-I) when they talk like Plato's philosopher kings?* ◆ CHANDRA SHEKHAR

★ *Can you marry your daughter to someone today and re-marry her to someone else tomorrow?* ◆ SURJIT SINGH BARNALA, on reshuffling governors

★ *Whenever I want to become the chief minister of Haryana, I can.*

◆ OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA

★ *My cabinet is like the ninth fleet of Russia.* ◆ LALOO PRASAD YADAV, on his 71-member cabinet

★ *We are all very ignorant persons in some way or the other. I cannot fly a plane and Rajiv Gandhi cannot wash a goat.* ◆ DEVI LAL

Business & Political Observer

★ *It is an unmitigated crime against the country and the people of India and this Government must go lock, stock and barrel.*

◆ K.K. TEWARY, on the refuelling of US planes in India

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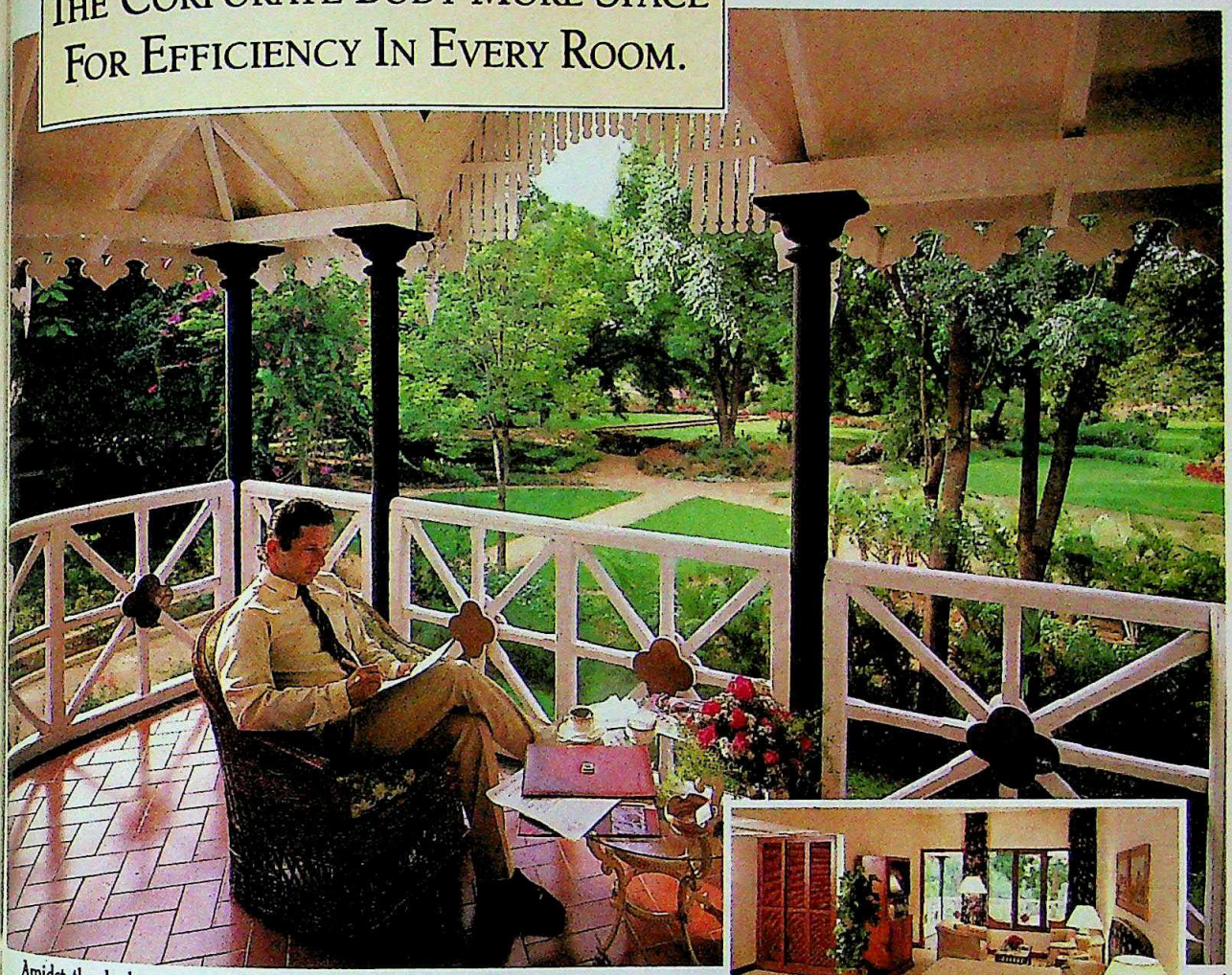
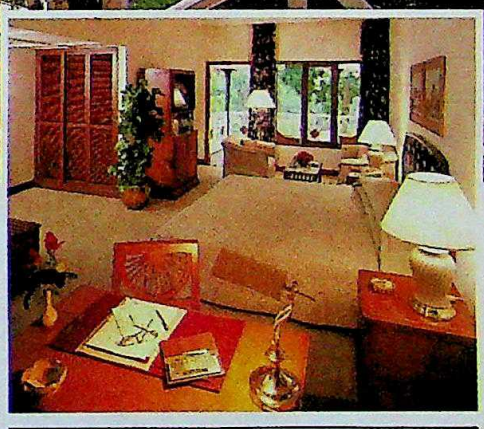
How The West End Gives The Corporate Body More Space For Efficiency In Every Room.





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V★O★I★C★E★S

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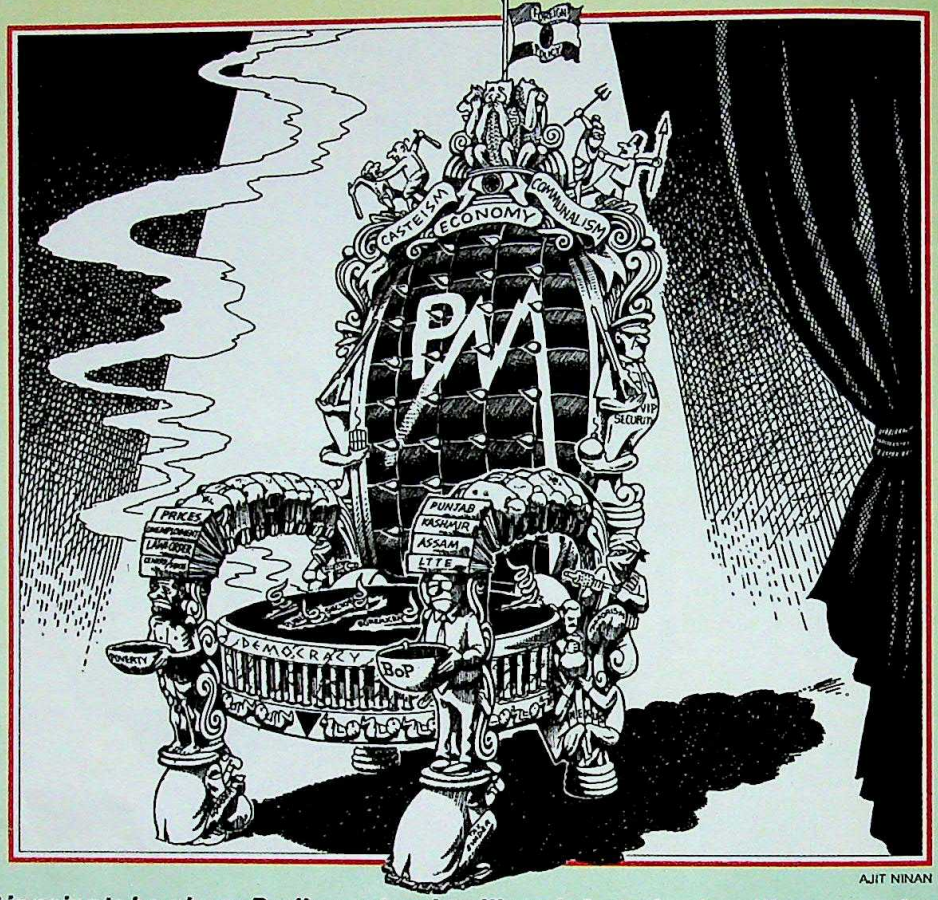

AJIT NINAN

★ *It is going to be a hung Parliament and we'll again be trying for alliances and cooperation. Why not try for them now and avoid elections?* ◆ SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY

★ *I came to India because I was missing my Swami.* ◆ ADNAN KHASHOGI

★ *I confess my failure in all my attempts to reform you. You listen only to sycophants.*
◆ SATPAL KAPOOR, AICC(I) member in his resignation letter to Rajiv Gandhi

★ *They (Congress-I) want to shoot from our shoulders. They want to insulate themselves from the blame of withdrawing support.* ◆ L.K. ADVANI

★ *I would like the words Hindu, Bharatiya and Indian to be synonymous.*
◆ L.K. ADVANI

★ *It will be a terrorist assembly if elections are held in the state under present conditions.*
◆ RAJIV GANDHI, on elections in Punjab

★ *The 800 million people are not there to make prime ministers out of people with beautiful faces.*
◆ CHANDRA SHEKHAR

★ *Good bye, Sir. We'll meet up again, up there. I'll never forget what you've meant to me. Good night, sweet prince.* ◆ MANI SHANKAR AIYER, on Rajiv Gandhi

★ *It is so unbelievable. When I visit Rajiv's house, I almost feel he is going to walk through the door.*
◆ AMITABH BACHCHAN

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V★O★I★C★E★S

★ *That is the way he was, that is the way the children and I remember him—always smiling.*
◆ SONIA GANDHI

★ *A sympathy wave is akin to a cheque which cannot be encashed twice.*
◆ SHANTA KUMAR, chief minister of Himachal Pradesh

★ *They've chosen a new name for the Indian National Congress. It's called the Italian National Congress.*
◆ OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA

★ *T.N. Seshan is like a man who marries in haste and repents at leisure.*
◆ K.R. MALKANI, BJP leader, on the decision to reconsider countermanded polls

★ *Where is the dynasty line in the Congress(I)? Who elected Indira Gandhi? Who voted for Rajiv Gandhi? Is it not the people of India who brought Rajiv Gandhi to power?*
◆ P.V. NARASIMHA RAO

★ *Being editor of* The Times of India *is the second most challenging job in the country. I am not the contender for the most challenging one and the rest are of no consequence.*
◆ DILEEP PADGAONKAR, editor of *The Times of India*, on his job

★ *The prime ministership is something which has come for reasons which no one could have imagined. Out of an event which no one could have anticipated.*
◆ P.V. NARASIMHA RAO

★ *Both the external and internal security of the rashtra are in the hands of Maharashtra.*
◆ S.B. CHAVAN

★ *I am thankful to such a family (Devi Lal and sons) which committed excesses and so the people of the state voted the Congress(I) to power.*
◆ BHAJAN LAL, chief minister of Haryana

★ *In the present situation we do not need a glamour man, but a sound man.*
◆ V.N. GADGIL, on P.V. Narasimha Rao

Indian Express

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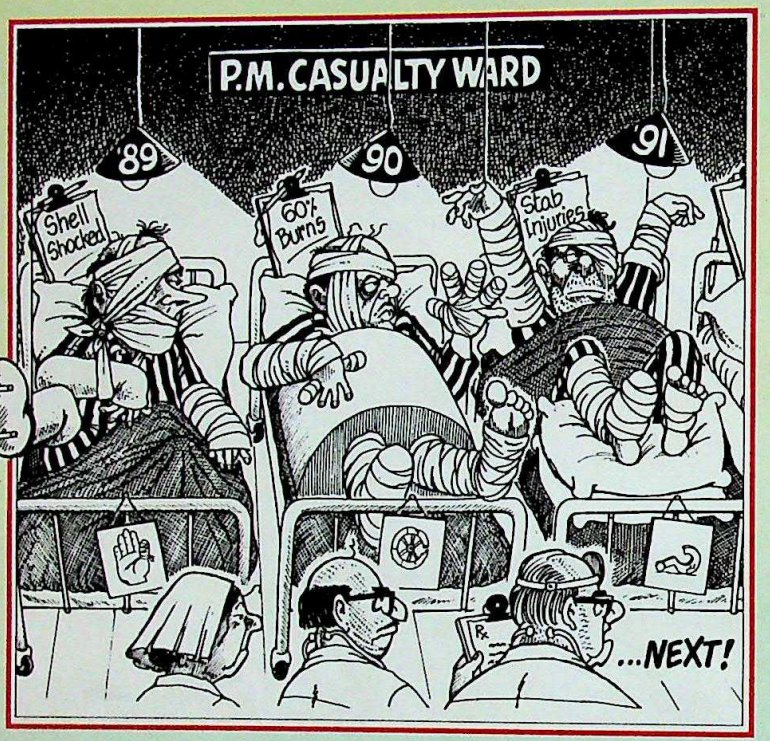
★ *I am a simple worker of the party. It's the greatness of the democratic system, your blessings and my luck that I am addressing you today.*

◆ P.V. NARASIMHA RAO, in his Independence Day speech



AJIT NINAN

★ *The country is literally and honestly broke.*

◆ RUSSI MODY, chairman of Tata Steel

★ *I am not very good at statistics. I am also a poor thinker.*

◆ MANMOHAN SINGH

★ *Since we heard she has gone, we feel orphaned.*

◆ RATNAKAR PANDEY, on Sonia's trip abroad

★ *The organisation is ad hoc, the issues are ad hoc.*

◆ AJIT SINGH, on the Janata Dal

★ *This is a slap on the face of those who attempted to separate sports from the country's interest.*

◆ BAL THACKERAY, on the cancellation of the one-day cricket match with Pakistan

★ *If L.K. Advani reacts to this and thinks this cap fits the entire party, that's his problem.* ◆ MADHAVRAO SCINDIA, referring to his 'deshdrohi' statement in Parliament

★ *Budget-making is not an academic exercise. It is a political exercise and one has to accept the realities of political life.*

◆ MANMOHAN SINGH

★ *Who dares oppose me? I am the Robin Hood of Bihar.* ◆ LALOO PRASAD YADAV

★ *I take pride in getting MLAs to defect to my party. It is my hobby and my way to making politics lively.*

◆ BHAJAN LAL

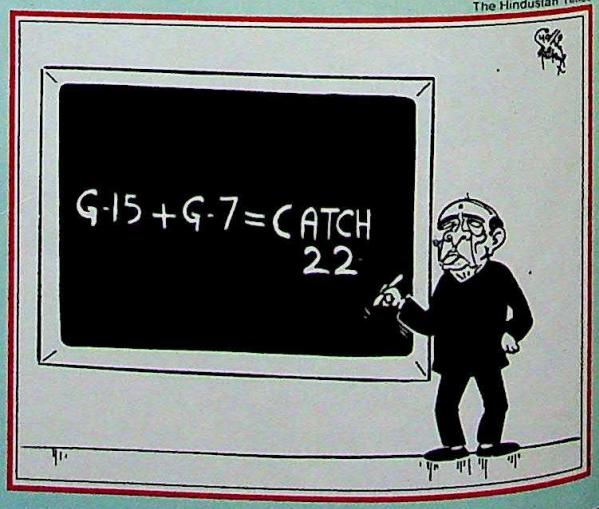
★ *Shot by a Khalistani terrorist, I would become a martyr to the cause of a united India.*

◆ KHUSHWANT SINGH, on how he would like to die

★ *The prosperous may be surprised to see Laloo Prasad Yadav travelling in a helicopter. Are we born to ride on the back of buffaloes all our lives?*

◆ LALOO PRASAD YADAV

The Hindustan Times



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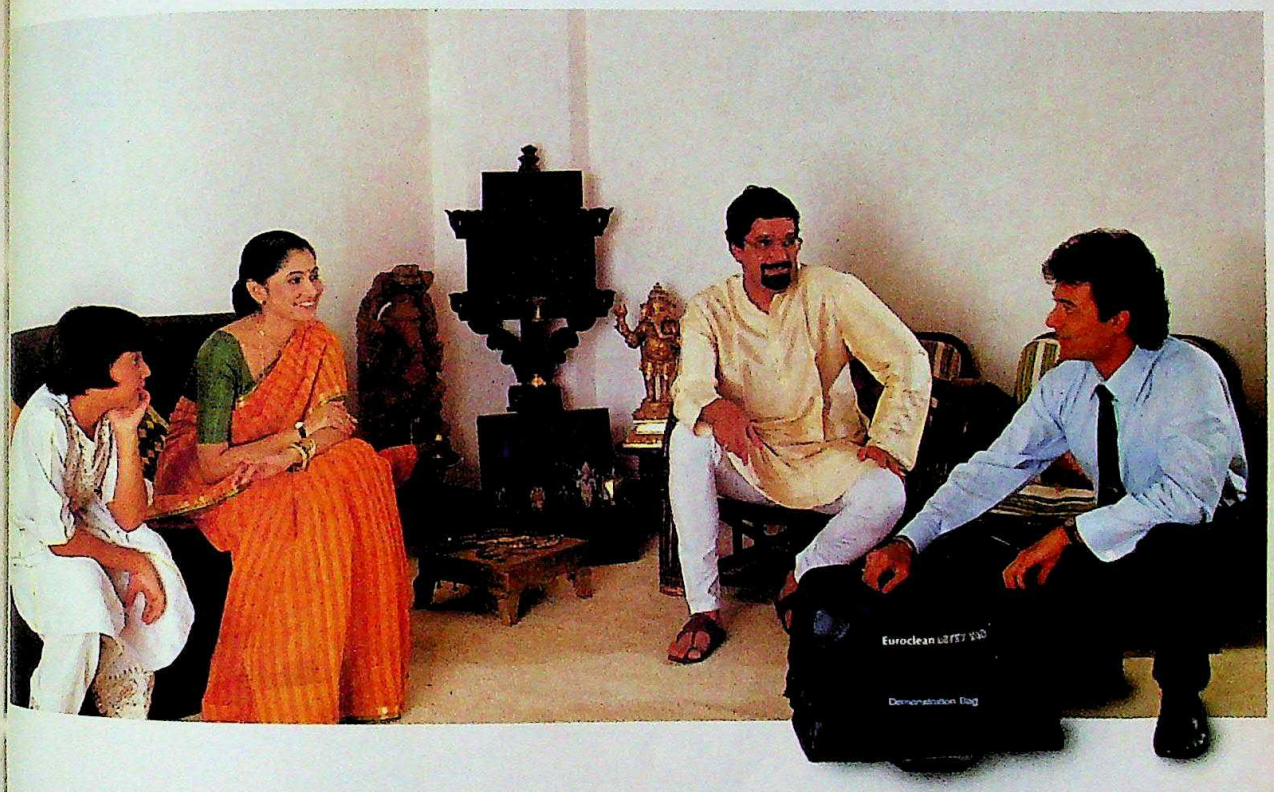

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V·O·I·C·E·S

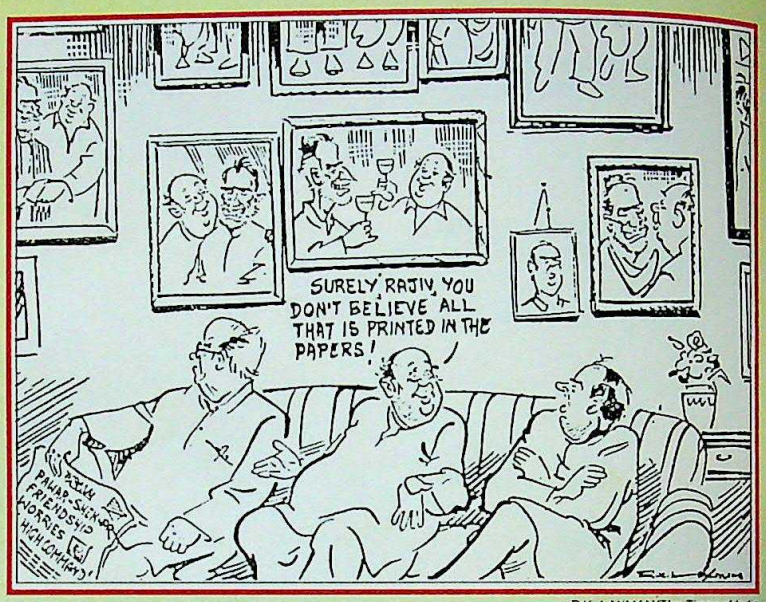
★ *Yes, for them (Sonia and her children), I will step down because Amethi is their constituency.*
◆ SATISH SHARMA

★ *One cannot lose what one does not have.*
◆ V.P. SINGH, on the Amethi loss

★ *There won't be elections. We have been completely colonised.*
◆ S.S. MANN

★ *For Congressmen, the BJP is worse than AIDS.*
◆ K.K. TEWARY

★ *I am the most condemned man. I am condemned to success.*
◆ BABA AMTE

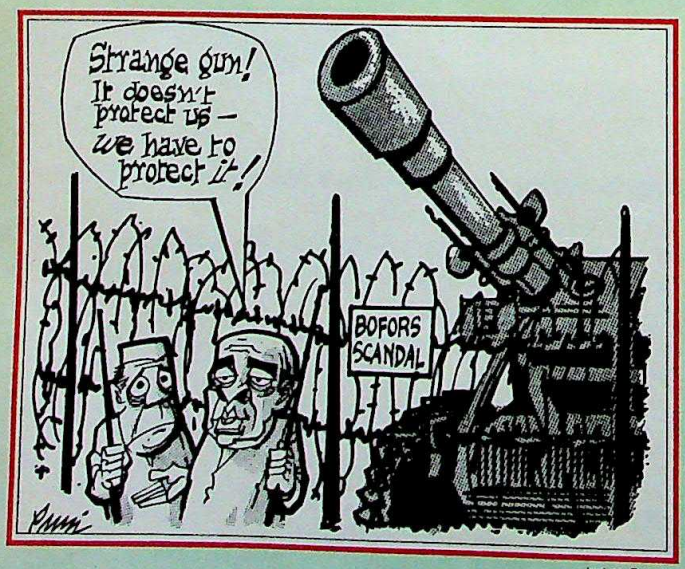


R.K. LAXMAN/The Times of India

★ *I cannot go around in a helicopter catching people with the satellite dish.*
◆ AJIT PANJA, on the threat of cable TV

★ *I am inundated with calls from women I know, all expressing dismay at the prospect of figuring in my book.*
◆ KHUSHWANT SINGH

★ *I feel that if you have too many batsmen you tend to pass on the buck.*
◆ MOHAMMED AZHARUDDIN



Indian Express

★ *I decided to infuse new life into the stereotyped villain, I think I have succeeded in my effort.*
◆ ANUPAM KHER

★ *I've already shown what I have so I'll stop exposing.*
◆ SHILPA SHIRODKAR

★ *Friends, why are you trying to steal my bread and butter from me?*
◆ OM PURI, after the shooting for *City of Joy* was suspended due to protests

★ *Virgins are almost extinct.*
◆ AMRITA SINGH

★ *I love you.*
◆ PROTIMA BEDI, on her favourite bedroom lie

★ *My film career is on the downslide. Do I look the sort of chap who can romance women half his age.*
◆ AMITABH BACHCHAN

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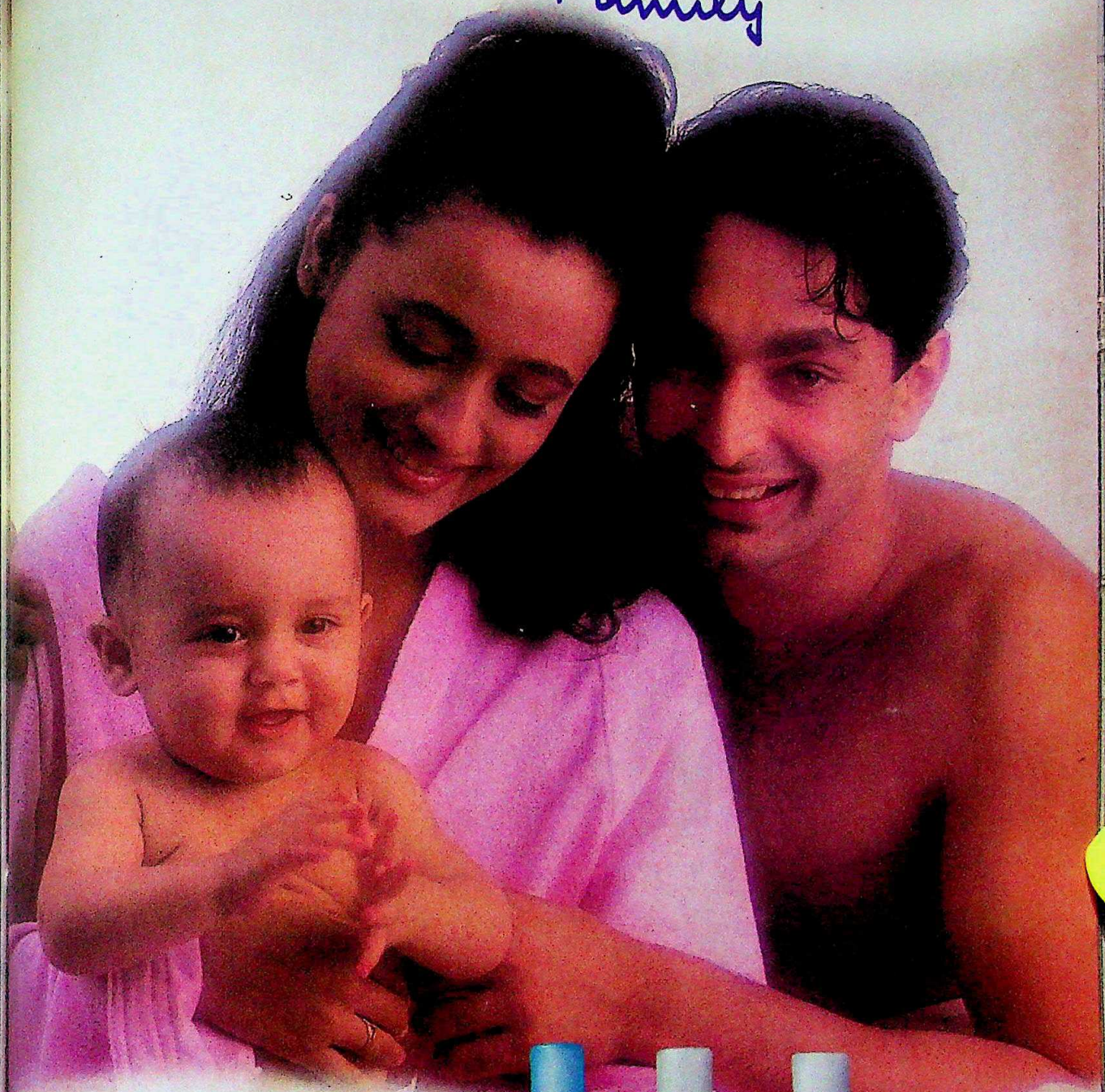
My Nivea Family



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You both are my world. My
dream come true.'

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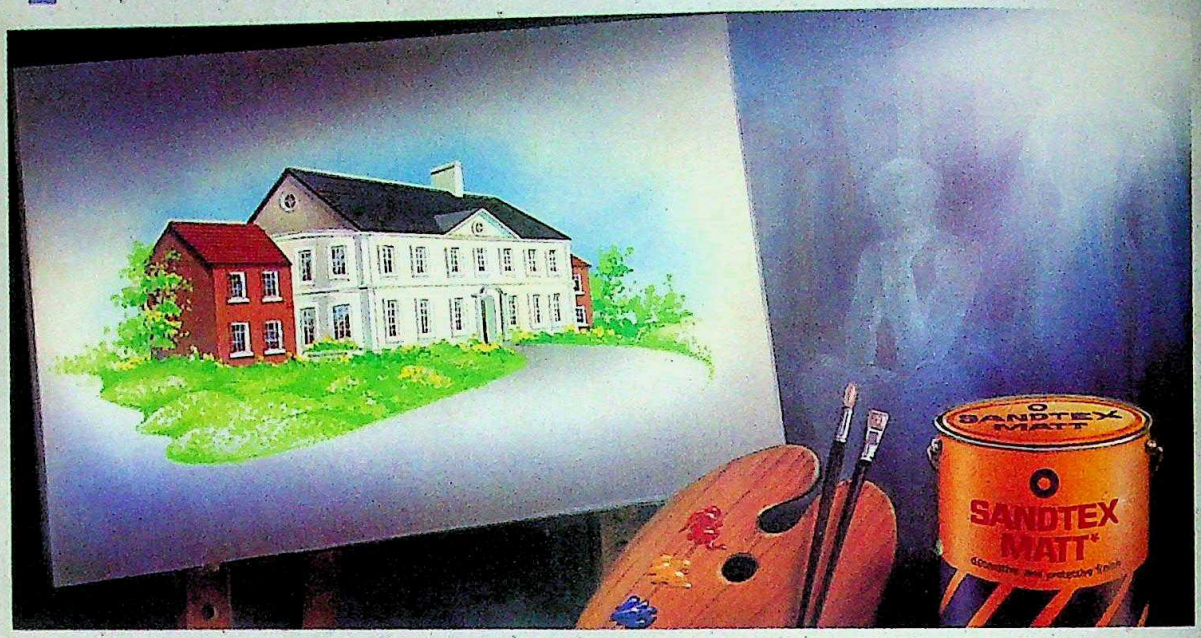

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A 91005
GANGUBAI HANGAL
(Vocal)
Bihag/Bageshree

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(Vocal)
Ahir Bhairav/Sampurna Malkaus

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SLOWDOWN

THE RISE OF THE BJP WAS THE YEAR'S POLITICAL PHENOMENON. THE AYODHYA CRESCENDO DIED DOWN BUT IT WAS A TACTICAL RETREAT IN THE FACE OF EMERGING POLITICAL REALITY.

AS a religious battle-cry, it aroused the kind of fundamentalist frenzy not witnessed in the country since Partition. As an electoral catchphrase, it was to prove equally explosive. For the BJP and its saffron soldiers, the strident slogan of 'Jai Shri Ram' was ostensibly aimed at capturing the nondescript triple domes of the Babri Masjid. But in reality, there was a bigger prize at stake—the seat of power in New Delhi.

The target was clearly defined by the hero of the Ayodhya crusade, L.K. Advani. On January 17, he predicted an election "in 1991 itself", adding that the "enhanced credibility and base" of the BJP would be reflected in the coming polls. With the party already in an election mood—it announced in February its intention to contest 480 Lok Sabha seats—the Ayodhya crusade was reaching a flashpoint. What reined in the party was the realisation that it needed to broaden its support beyond the Ayodhya issue if its plan of coming to power was to work. At its Jaipur convention in mid-February, the leadership committed itself to adding Hindu nationalism to aggressive Hinduism. Under the new gameplan, the crisis in Kashmir became the focus. And, in a related tactical retreat, the party decided to tone down its Ayodhya rhetoric.

By March 6, with Chandra Shekhar having resigned and elections announced, there was a perceptible shift in the party's strategy. 'Ram' was expanded to *'Ram, Roti aur Insaaf'* (Ram, Bread and Justice). Clearly worried about the Mandal issue, the party now included economic backwardness in its electoral ambit. But the basic thrust of its strategy was to project itself as the sole provider of stability.

Organisationally, the BJP with its well-oiled network of RSS-affiliated organisations across the country, had a distinct edge over any of its rivals. The massive—and militant—VHP rally in the capital on April 4, was a timely show of strength. The results of the general elections showed impressive gains for the party symbolised, most visibly, by its spectacular victory in Uttar Pradesh. Its tally of 119 seats confirmed its emergence as a major party, in fact, the second largest in the Lok Sabha. In statistical terms, the party had doubled its national vote share from 11 per cent in 1989 to 20 per cent 18 months later.

But the results also contained crucial lessons. The attempts to broaden its electoral base had not really succeeded. It remained traditionally urban, upper caste and male-oriented with the gains being among the backwards.

The fact that the disputatious Ayodhya site was under Uttar Pradesh's territorial sway added an intriguing twist to the controversy. Now the biter was being bit. The stealthy take-over of the land around the site by the state Government in October was symbolic of the dilemma facing the party on the issue.

Eventually, it was to provide the reins of restraint. The BJP leadership had awoken to the realisation that riding the Ayodhya tiger, despite its electoral advantages, had its political downside as well. The communal passions the Ayodhya issue had uncovered—the Varanasi riots in November being its latest manifestation—had alienated a large section of the populace and, more important, damaged the BJP's most sale-

An assault on Ayodhya put the BJP in a political quandary

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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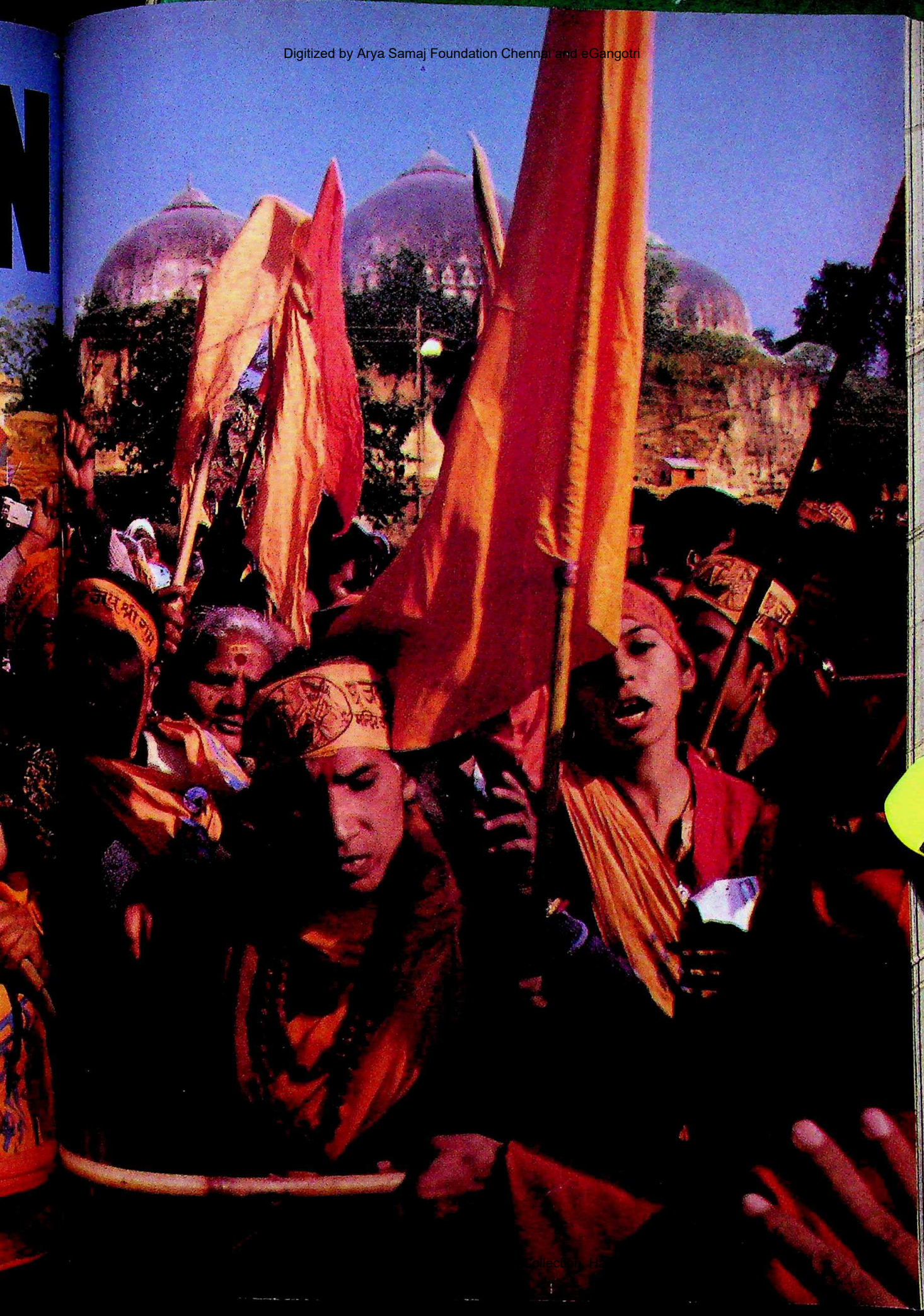

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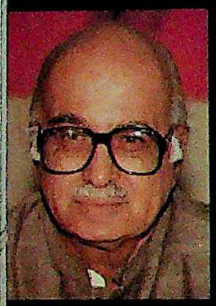
able image—of a disciplined party. The October assault on Ayodhya by VHP hotheads sharpened that further.

THE BJP's strategic gameplan was starting to go awry. The saffron surge the party had unleashed in its bid to build the Ram temple at Ayodhya was coming in conflict with political reality. The lotus was now clashing with the trishul. Electoral success added further restrictions. As the largest opposition party in Parliament, the BJP was now part of the establishment, constitutionally committed to upholding the law and acting with restraint and responsibility. There were other crucial factors that finally convinced the party to push the Ayodhya issue under a convenient legal carpet. With Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh the focus of national attention, the party was caught in a trap of its own making. For Kalyan Singh, the dilemma was how to uphold his public pledge to protect the Babri Masjid while still maintaining control over—and appeasing—the militant elements in the VHP and the Bajrang Dal.



"OUR WORKERS FORGET WE ARE A POLITICAL PARTY AND NOT A RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION."
L.K. ADVANI

"THE AIM OF THE EKTA YATRA IS TO EMPHASISE THE FAILURE OF SECULARISM IN INDIA."
MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI

"WERE WE MILITANT, NO MOSQUE WOULD HAVE REMAINED IN AYODHYA."
ASHOK SINGHAL

The VHP rally in Delhi was a timely show of strength

The subsequent interim high court order in November prohibiting the transfer of the acquired land to any group and banning any new structures on it came as a rude jolt to the BJP and VHP leadership. Suddenly, the rules of the game had changed. No deadlines were being given, merely a promise that the temple would be constructed when the legal questions were resolved. The storm of protest from the more militant mahants further embarrassed the party, now, for the first time, looking somewhat helpless and in disarray.

There were also bigger issues coming into play. The performance of the four BJP state governments had been anything but inspiring. Also, demolition of the masjid could possibly invite the dismissal of the Kalyan Singh Government. All this combined to convince even the VHP that Ayodhya was turning into a political boomerang. As its visibly-flustered supremo Ashok Singhal stated in November: "Were we militant, there would be no mosque in Ayodhya."

But easily the most persuasive factor was that the BJP was in danger of being branded as a one-issue party. Inherent in that realisation was the uncomfortable fact that the party had failed to project a broader, national image for itself. That failure could prove disastrous in the long run.

The party's controversial Ekta Yatra, intended to end in Srinagar on Republic Day, could provide the trigger. Though ostensibly intended as a march of unity, earlier BJP yatras have endowed it with dangerous communal overtones. By largely ignoring the yatra, the Government has hit the ball right back in the BJP court. Clearly, the BJP's strategy of blow-hot-blow-cold and its search for broader national issues to add to its restricted agenda has put the party in an awkward political position.

The BJP's crisis of identity was perhaps best illustrated by the intriguing end-November statement by Bhaurao Deoras, brother of RSS supremo Balasaheb Deoras, who went so far as to suggest a coalition between the BJP and the Congress(I). Paradoxically, the BJP seems to be hoist on its own trident. How it resolves that existential dilemma in the months ahead will determine its political karma. ◆

SHARAD SAXENA

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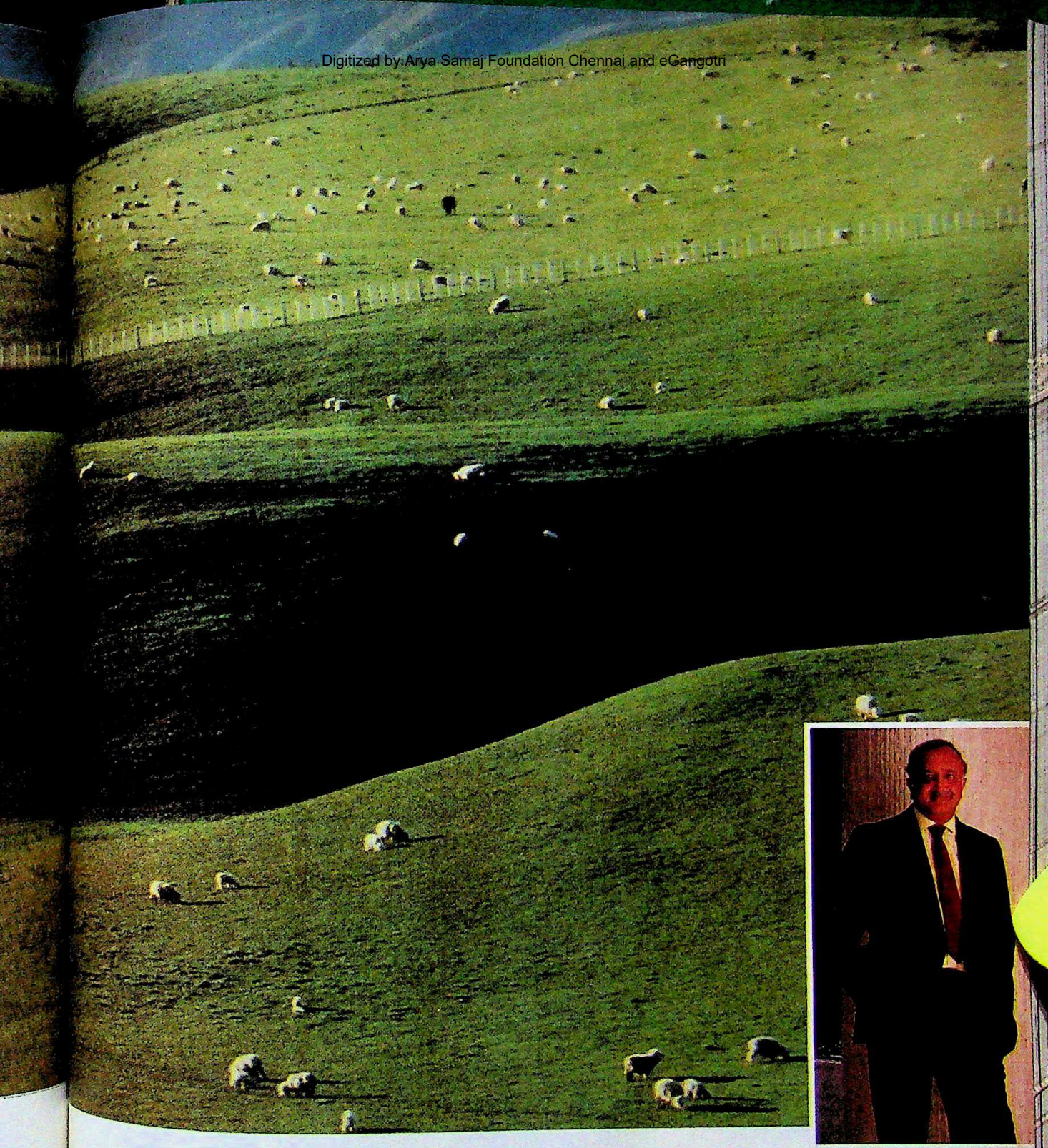

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CRACKD

HE was, perhaps, the most heavily guarded man on earth. The circumstances of his mother's assassination had haunted his political existence and cocooned him within a shroud of security. Now, in a desperate attempt to recapture his rapport with the people, the security was allowed to slip, the crowds closed in, as did the swarthy, bespectacled woman with a garland in her hand, a smile on her face and a deadly bomb around her waist.

The explosion that ripped through Sriperumbudur, a sleepy hamlet in Tamil Nadu, was shocking enough for the carnage it caused; mangled flesh was all that remained of Rajiv Gandhi and 27 others, including the female suicide bomber. But it also jolted the country awake to another insidious danger; the Frankenstein-like monster which successive Tamil Nadu governments had been patronising in the form of militant Tamil separatists from Sri Lanka. Notably, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the most fanatical and easily the most powerful.

The link between the LTTE and the blast at Sriperumbudur was not immediately apparent. The Liberation Tigers had never really been viewed as a security threat to Rajiv except in occasional briefs put out by the Intelligence Bureau following the dispatch of an Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) into Sri Lanka to tame the Tigers. But the Tamil Nadu connection was too obvious to ignore. As was the chosen method; a Kamikaze-type, suicide mission which had become an LTTE speciality.

For the crack task force set up to probe the assassination, the odds seemed unsurmountable. Mrs Gandhi's assassins were known members of her own security cordon, both were Sikhs and one had even been taken alive. In the Rajiv killing, all that remained of the suicide bomber were dismembered limbs among the others piled up in a hospital mortuary. Despite that, the breakthrough was swift and startling.

A camera found at the blast site

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DOWN

RAJIV'S ASSASSINATION CREATES A SERIOUS POLITICAL VACUUM AND LEADS TO A BELATED CRACKDOWN ON THE ELABORATE LTTE NETWORK IN THE COUNTRY.

M.A. PARTHASARATHY/Ananda Vikatan

provided the initial clues. Anasuya, a female sub-inspector on duty at the Sriperumbudur rally, had noticed a group of five people hovering around the VIP enclosure before Rajiv's arrival. Later to describe their movements as "suspicious", she ordered them away. The two males in the group claimed they represented the press; one had a camera, the other, a notebook. The female members, one of whom carried a heavy, sandalwood garland, were undistinguishable from the locals who had congregated for the rally. All five spoke Tamil fluently.

SHE noticed the woman with the garland again, trying to get close to Rajiv when he arrived around 10 p.m. The niggling suspicion prompted Anasuya to try and prevent the woman from getting close to the red carpet leading to the dais. She was stopped by Rajiv himself who brusquely snapped: "Let everyone get a chance." The irony was fatal. Anasuya moved back, saving her own life. The woman she had tried to stop, garlanded Rajiv, bent down to touch his feet and triggered the bomb hidden under her kurta.

The next morning, sleuths sifting through the debris at the site of the blast came across a camera. Though badly damaged, the film was intact. When developed, it featured photographs of the same group of five recorded in Anasuya's statement. The photographer, Haribabu, died in the blast.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) had, by now, identified all the victims of the bomb except one, the headless torso and severed limbs of a woman. DNA printing matched her flesh with that sticking to pieces of a denim vest with pockets which had contained plastic explosive and bits of wire. The contours of an LTTE connection were becoming clearer. The Tigers boasted of a Shadow Squad, comprising of female recruits

The carnage at Sriperumbudur stunned the nation

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who volunteered for suicide missions.

After a decade of providing the LTTE sanctuary and support, the Government finally ordered a crackdown on the organisation and its local sympathisers. Once that trigger was pulled, the pieces of the assassination puzzle started tumbling into place. Members of other Tamil groups picked up for qyestioning identified Sivarasan, an explosives expert trusted by Tiger supremo, Pirabhakaran. Sivarasan had lost his left eye in an explosion and was immediately christened 'One-Eyed Jack'. The woman with the garland in the photographs was identified as Dhanu, also an LTTE recruit from Jaffna. Armed with enough evidence, a spate of arrests followed.

Their interrogation revealed the broad outlines of the plot, seemingly hatched in the jungles of Jaffna by Pirabhakaran in end-1990. The motivation was manifold; Pirabhakaran had been shoddily treated and had been kept under virtual house arrest by Rajiv and his aides in New Delhi, prior to the agreement for a cease-fire by the LTTE in July 1987. Known to be a man with a monumental ego, the insult would have been unacceptable to Pirabhakaran. Days later, when the Liberation Tigers reneged on the agreement, Rajiv sent the IPKF into northern Sri Lanka. Apart from the hundreds of Tigers killed, LTTE propaganda harped on 'atrocities' committed by the IPKF.

The assassination plot was given greater urgency by political developments in India. The Karunanidhi government had been dismissed in Tamil Nadu on the grounds of encouraging LTTE movement in the state. Now, a snap general election was almost certain to bring Rajiv back to power at the Centre and, more crucial, Jayalalitha to the occupancy of Fort St. George in Madras. The inevitable result: a crackdown against the LTTE in Tamil Nadu. Moroever, as opposition leader and in election mode, Rajiv was more vulnerable than he would be as prime minister.

So far, the hundreds of LTTE militants arrested in the crackdown had only exposed the tip of the LTTE iceberg in the state. It was the frenzied chase to capture Sivarasan that exposed the labyrinth of safe houses, sympathisers and support structures, the organisation had established in Tamil Nadu, virtually amounting to a parallel government.

ON August 20, almost three months after the assassination, a tip-off by the wife of an LTTE sympathiser brought the massive manhunt for One-Eyed Jack to a climactic end. Sivarasan and Shubha, the standby for Dhanu, were cornered in a suburb of Bangalore in neighbouring Karnataka. But by the time the decision to storm the hide-out was taken, One-Eyed Jack, Shubha and two other LTTE militants had swallowed cyanide. The trail had run cold.

The crackdown, however, escalated. The SIT and Tamil Nadu Police had begun to unravel the larger conspiracy behind the Rajiv assassination—the elimination of Chief Minister Jayalalitha as part of a strategy aimed at eventually forming a greater Eelam comprising north-eastern Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. The initial incredulity with which the greater Eelam plan was greeted quickly dissipated with the sensational November arrest of L. Nagarajan, home secretary during Karunanidhi's reign.

Nagarajan's arrest was the starkest symbol of the LTTE's subversive stranglehold on the state: from politicians to policemen, bureaucrats and businessmen, smugglers and sympathisers, the organisa-

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dia's biggest manhunt ends: sasan and Shubha after consuming de (above); Pirabhakaran (right); Dhanu (centre), the live bomb

infiltration was octupus-like. to transport weaponry, currency s in Delhi and Bombay to move its a host of travel agencies and s to supply passports and transit es for its cadres, an elaborate unication network between and Tamil Nadu. The tentacles d everywhere.

ith evidence piling up and the bracing itself for a fresh spate of ive arrests before the year is out, TE monster in Tamil Nadu has mortally wounded. The narrow between the Tamil Nadu coast and hern Sri Lanka which the Tigers so freely is now heavily patrolled. mmunication network has been hed and its support structure in the largely dismantled.

fter Sriperumbudur, overt political rt for the Tigers is suicidal. The six-h-long crackdown could finally the curtain down on the LTTE's ous Tamil Nadu connection and its er security implications. The trag- that it took Rajiv Gandhi's life to that about. ◆

SHYAM TEKWANI

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SHOWDOWN

THE 1991 ELECTIONS THREATENED TO BE DIVISIVE. V.P. SINGH'S MANDALISATION. THE BJP'S HINDUTVA CRUSADE. THE CONGRESS(I)'S STABILITY PLANK. ALL SYMBOLS OF AN APOCALYPTIC SHOWDOWN.

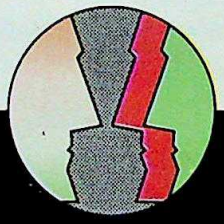
IT may have appeared ignominious that the mid-term poll in May should have been brought about by two lowly constables from Chautala's Haryana on a snooping mission. But in retrospect, and viewed against the backdrop of 16 months of political chicanery, it seemed an apt enough epitaph for a government that sneaked into South Block from the rear entrance and with just 54 members in Lok Sabha.

The fact that the Chandra Shekhar government had one foot permanently poised over the Congress(I) banana peel had already lent an air of inevitability to the prospect of a mid-term poll. The epidemic of political instability merely shortened the deadline. On March 6, less than four months after creating dubious history as India's eighth prime minister, Chandra Shekhar made the lonely journey to Rashtrapati Bhavan to hand in his resignation.

For the disillusioned voter, the wider choice of national leaders—Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, L.K. Advani and Chandra Shekhar was clearly offset by the new phase in India's electoral evolution, of minority governments and coalition politics.

Strapped for cash, limited in appeal, chasing similar vote banks and facing an angry voter, an air of desperation dominated the scene. The overbearing presence of the trigger-happy and controversial Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan as electoral policeman best symbolised the combative nature of India's tenth general election. The fact that the snap poll was scheduled for the mid-summer month of May only added to the over-heated atmosphere.

The sombre mood that shrouded the pre-election proceedings was tell-tale. The tailor-made slogans of 1989—Mandal for V.P. Singh, Ram for Advani and Stability for Rajiv—had been reduced to uncomfortable cliches. Mandal had ushered in caste conflict, Ram brought communal strife and Stability had been rendered meaningless by Rajiv's relations with the Chandra Shekhar government. With nothing new to offer, the major players in the electoral drama cloaked the same slogans in different attire in a desperate attempt to broaden their appeal.



RAJIV WAS CLEARLY THE FRONT-RUNNER. WHILE CAMPAIGNING, HE WAS MORE ACCESSIBLE. MORE HUMBLE.

Thus, V.P. Singh's obsession with the Mandal report was modified in favour of his new battle-cry of "social equality" while reservations for the poor now included upper caste indigents. For good measure, his Janata Dal also pledged to provide 'genuine' federalism. Rajiv's advertising wunderkinds, realising that the stability plank was somewhat shaky and shop-worn, came up with a catch-all jingle: *"Ram, Rahim, Rozi aur Roti"*. The pitch was to Hindus, Muslims and the unemployed youth.

Even the BJP realised that it could not live by Ram alone. Taking a leaf from V.P. Singh's electoral book, the party slogan became *"Ram, Roti aur Insaf"* (Ram, Bread and Justice). By getting the election machinery moving in February in anticipation of a snap poll, the party had gained a clear advantage and was clearly bent on broadening its appeal. The dark horse in the race, Chandra Shekhar, had the least chances but the most obvious plank: his performance in South Block.

That strategy spilled over into the respective campaigns, a stark contrast in styles. The most dramatic difference was in Rajiv's roadshow. Gone was the arrogance, in its place, humility, even contriteness. He bends down to clasp the hands of an old man, a heart patient who complains of having waited two hours in the heat, and apologises profusely, uncharacteristically. Gone too is the obsession with security and bullet-proof vests and layers of gun-toting guards. "I have learnt from my mistakes," he admits, "I should never have lost communication with the people." Missing is the aloofness that alienated a majority of his countrymen. He mingles with the crowds, shakes hands, signs autographs, listens to problems, jokes with the women and children. This is a new Rajiv, rejuvenated, relaxed and real.

In comparison, V.P. Singh, the Mandal messiah, wore a dishevelled, even desperate air. The star campaigner of the National Front combine, Singh

Rajiv on the campaign trail, a politician reborn

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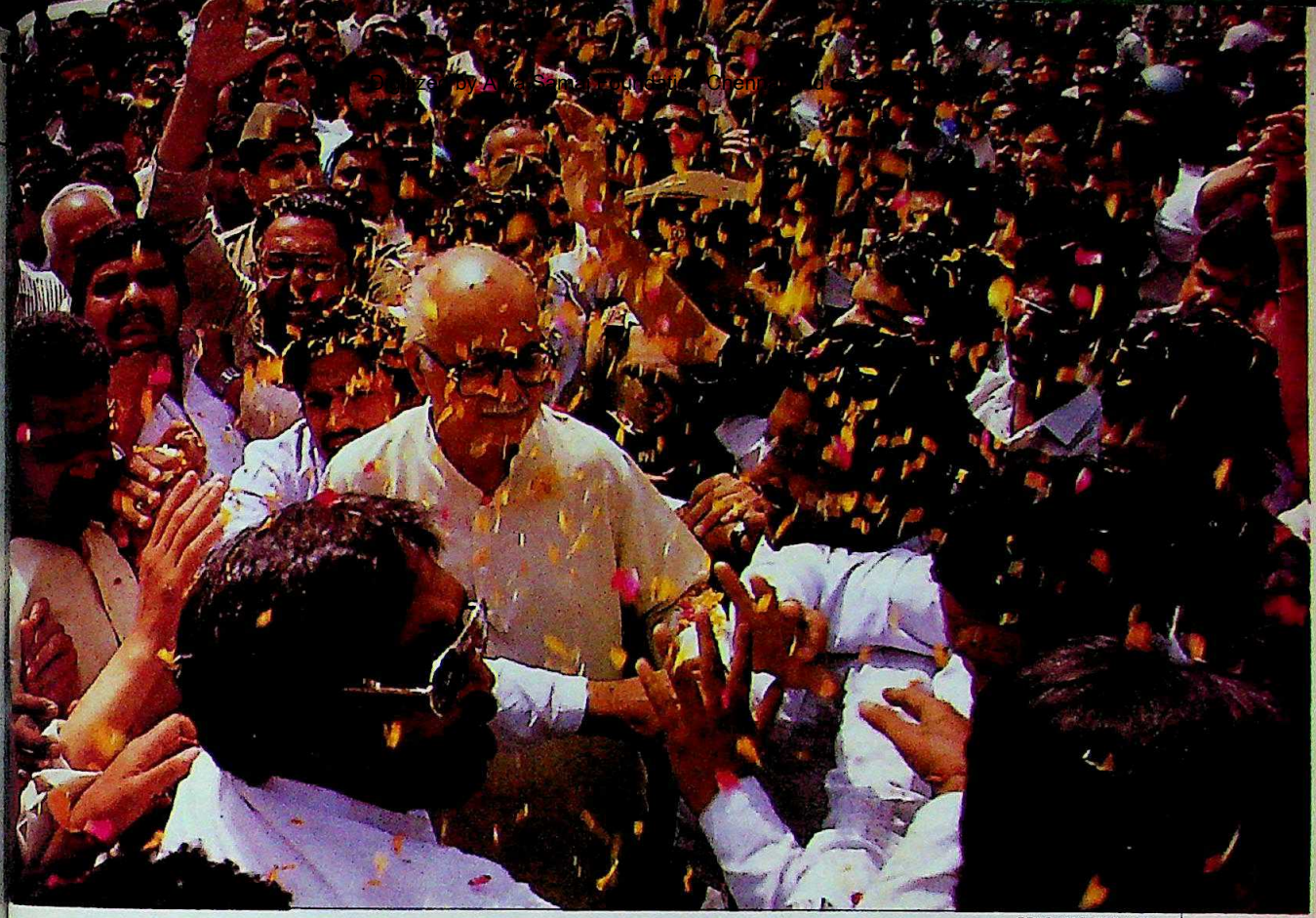

PRASHANT PANJAIR

Sober, dignified and confident, Advani was the vehicle for propagating the BJP

mpaign starts off in desultory fash-, a clear indication that the magic ich conjured up electoral triumph 1989 is wearing exceedingly thin. re crucial, he seemed a man in undering search of a constituency. s 1987 crusade against corruption d Big Business had endeared him to e middle class. He lost them with the ndal mania in 1989. In his attempt e all things to all people, Singh, in e March of 1991, found himself in nger of being marginalised. There s none of the infectious enthusiasm the raise-your-hands gimmickry of e 1989 campaign. His generals, Ram as Paswan and Sharad Yadav, opted militant Mandal postures but gh was clearly uncomfortable with t. His speeches were more subdued, re down-to-earth. This was bread-d-butter politics and V.P. Singh the enomenon had been reduced, by the nts of the last 16 months, to just other politician on the stump. The eacher was present but the promise s gone.

Not so for L.K. Advani. R.K. Lax-n's common man look-alike had rly got the measure of this election. boldened by the flood of prominent ple, including a surprising number senior service officers, who had mbered aboard the BJP bandwagon,

Advani ran a charismatic campaign. Much of that had to do with his style and his image. In contrast to the incendiary rhetoric of the Uma Bharatis from his party, Advani came across as sober, dignified and confident. His tone was measured and there was a total absence of frills and fanciful promises. Nor did he attack his rivals with any venom. "We have to stress the positive aspects of our standpoints instead of harping on the Congress(I)," he said.

OFTEN resembling a benign schoolmaster when he chided youngsters at his rallies for making too much noise, he was the perfect vehicle for propagating the BJP's 1991 electoral strategy, of stressing nationalism and not Hindutva, reassuring the Muslims, wooing the poor, playing up the Ayodhya card, targeting the southern states, but mainly projecting his party as a national alternative. Having given a number of seats to Backward candidates, Advani and his party were also bent on grabbing a chunk of the Mandal votes.

The May 21 Sriperumbudur tragedy stopped the country—and the election—in its tracks. The brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi added an unforeseen and crucial factor to the electoral outcome. The pre-assassination opinion polls had been consistent—the country was heading for another hung Parliament. A sympathy wave in 1984 had afforded Rajiv the largest mandate in Indian history. Now, the main question was whether history was going to repeat itself. The assassination forced a re-draft of electoral strategy for all the parties.

In the event, the sympathy factor did affect the outcome, but far less than expected. The INDIA TODAY opinion poll, conducted between May 7 and May 10, had forecast 233 seats for the leader in the race, the Congress(I). The final tally gave the leaderless Congress(I), 225. The sympathy factor had played a part—nation-wide, there had been a 5.7 per cent swing away from the Congress(I) in the first round of polling in May. The second post-assassination round in June witnessed a 1.6 swing in favour of the party. In fact, if the assassination had not taken place, the Congress(I) would have wound up with around 190 seats. In a post-assassination election, psephologist projections gave the party about 265 seats. Moreover, the increase in voter turn-out after the assassination

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in states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan also helped the party. Most states also saw a switch in voting preferences. In Andhra Pradesh, about 9 per cent of Telugu Desam voters shifted electoral support to the Congress(I) and in the 'cow belt', the BJP and Janata Dal lost a significant number of voters to the Congress(I), mainly Muslims and women.

Clearly, the most prominent characteristic of the 1991 polls was the emergence of the federal nature of the country, manifest in the diversity of electoral swings. There were no sweeps for any party across entire regions like the Hindi belt. Instead, the swings were on a state-by-state basis with local issues having considerable sway.

The biggest gainer in the election was clearly the BJP. By raising its parliamentary presence from 85 to 119 and its vote share from 11 per cent to 20 per cent, the BJP firmly established itself as a major party, the largest opposition grouping in the Lok Sabha. Moreover, apart from the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the party had gone to the polls without any alliances or seat arrangements and still contested an unprecedented 490 constituencies.

The Janata Dal, almost predictably, took a beating. Its overall vote percentage registered the largest drop of any party in the election and its tally dipped from 143 in 1989 to a beggarly 55. As a national force, the party seemed finished with its presence reflected in only three states—Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa.

For the Left, it was a mixed bag with the Left Front retaining power convincingly in West Bengal. But the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front in Kerala ended up a surprise loser despite being in the electoral driving seat when campaigning commenced.

The November by-elections saw a continuation of that trend with the Congress(I) bagging eight of the 15 Lok Sabha seats, an indication that its new leader, Narasimha Rao, was making an unexpected impact on national politics. The BJP added two more to its tally but lost out in the south where it had hoped for gains. V.P. Singh's downslide continued and was only checked by the party's Bihar strongman Laloo Prasad Yadav.

Yet for all that, there were some disquieting signals. Violence and booth capturing became increasingly blatant, aided by the increasing number of criminals shielding behind the fig-leaf of politics. But eventually, the most significant message from the 1991 electoral scene was the fact that the country was witness to a major watershed in Indian politics—rule by minority governments. ◆

COMD

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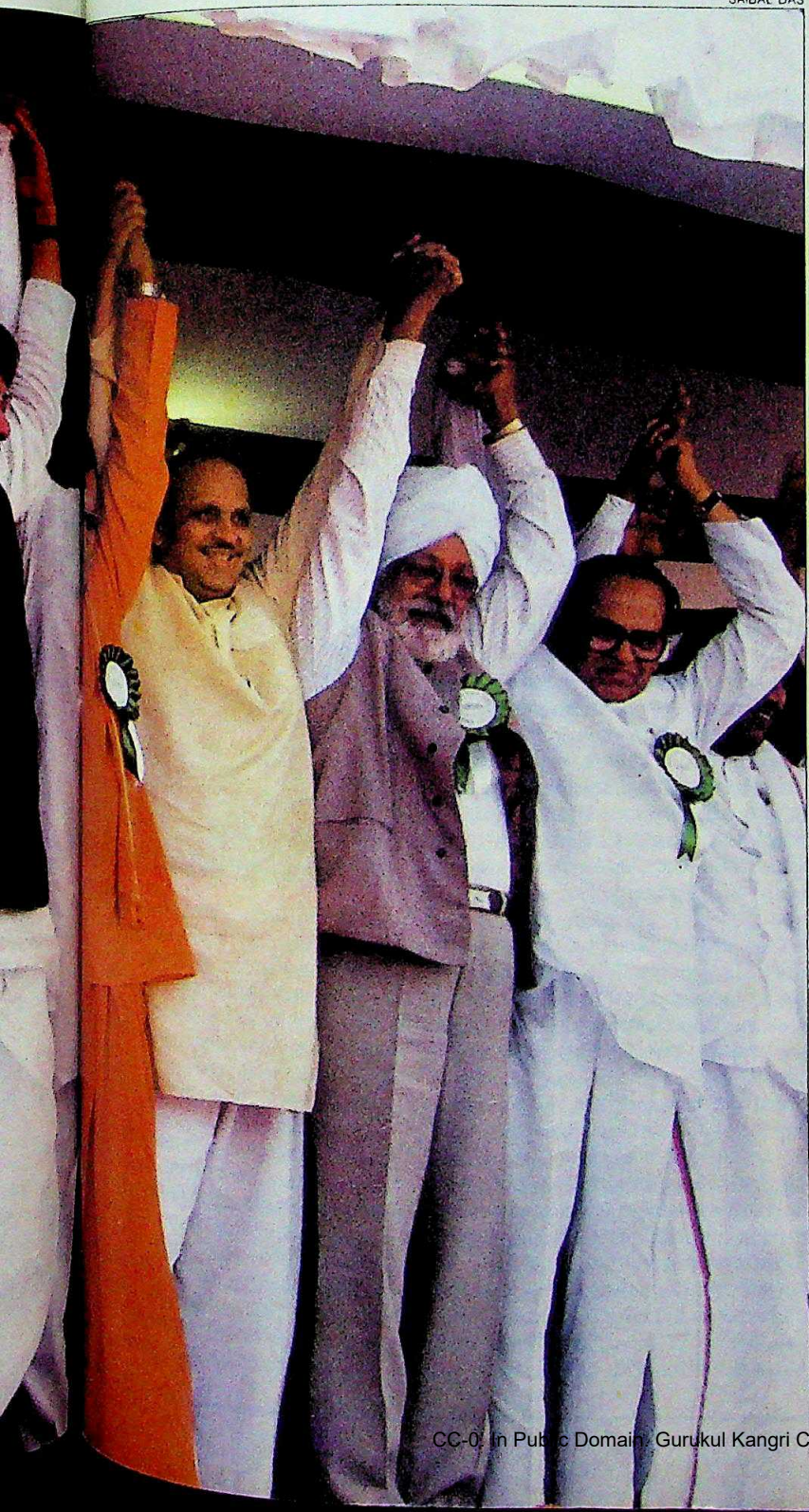
DOWN

ELEVEN MONTHS AGO, V.P. SINGH WAS PRIME MINISTER, TODAY HE IS A POLITICAL NON-ENTITY, HIS IMAGE AS A NATIONAL FIGURE TARNISHED, HIS PARTY IN A SHAMBLES.

SAIBAL DAS



JUST four years earlier, he had been hailed as a hero, the new broom which was finally going to clean up Indian politics. Principles were his thing then, the mesmeric mantra that electrified the country. With Bofors as his battle-cry, he rode the tidal wave of his anti-corruption crusade into a political sunrise that was dazzling in intensity. For V.P. Singh, there seemed only one direction to his political future—upwards. The Jan Morcha. The Janata Dal. The National Front. The upward climb came effortlessly, as if ordained.

Even the questions raised about his credentials—his whimsical ways, his image as a loner, his inflexibility, his performance under pressure, and the resignation letters he flashed at strategic moments, were ignored in the country's desperate search for a new political messiah. The monicker of Mr Clean, in an atmosphere corroded by corruption, was enough to propel him to prime ministership in 1989. But as rapid as his rise, was his fall from public grace. The honeymoon was over almost before it began. Devi Lal and Chautala. Mufti and his kidnapped daughter. The mayhem at Meham. The Mandal immolations. Eleven months after he took over, Singh was discarded and discredited, betrayed by those who had put him in power.

By the time 1991 came around, his political wheel had come full circle. The split in the Janata Dal engineered by Chandra Shekhar had brought Singh back into a Jan Morcha-type situation, undisputed leader of a cohesive and manageable opposition grouping. The deckhands on the Janata Dal ship had changed. Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan, Satpal Malik marginalised in favour of S.R. Bommai, Sharad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan. And, an increasingly uncomfortable Ajit Singh. But what remained intact was the crusading zeal, now reserved for reservations.

Shorn of the pressures of office and

National Front leaders at a Patna rally in March

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keeping rivals at bay. Singh seemed a man reborn. At the party's February convention in the temple town of Puri, Singh was ebullient, relaxed and supremely confident. The party leadership had proudly unfurled its banner of social justice as if it had just discovered some new and revolutionary electoral invention. Between Mandal and mandir—the backwards and the minorities—the party was talking about forming the next government along with the Left parties. Considering the disastrous slide of the past year, the optimism seemed unreal, even hallucinogenic.

THE euphoria mainly emanated from V.P. Singh and what he believed was a master-stroke, a political coup de grace with earth-shaking ramifications. In much the same manner that he had sprung Mandal on an unsuspecting country, Singh announced that 60 per cent of party positions would be reserved for the weaker sections and minorities.

More than the country, the announcement came as a shock to the party leadership who had descended on Puri to finalise party posts. But with Singh promptly performing his favourite party trick of offering to resign all the posts he held to become a "simple soldier of the party', his colleagues were left floundering in confusion.

The fact that Singh had not consulted any of them before springing his surprise may have been characteristic of the man. But it left behind an irate leadership, an unstructured party administration and the fears that the more Singh tilted towards the backward castes, the more he was likely to alienate the rest of the population. More important, the strategy hinged around massive electoral support from the backward castes. If that failed to materialise, the party was clearly headed for trouble.

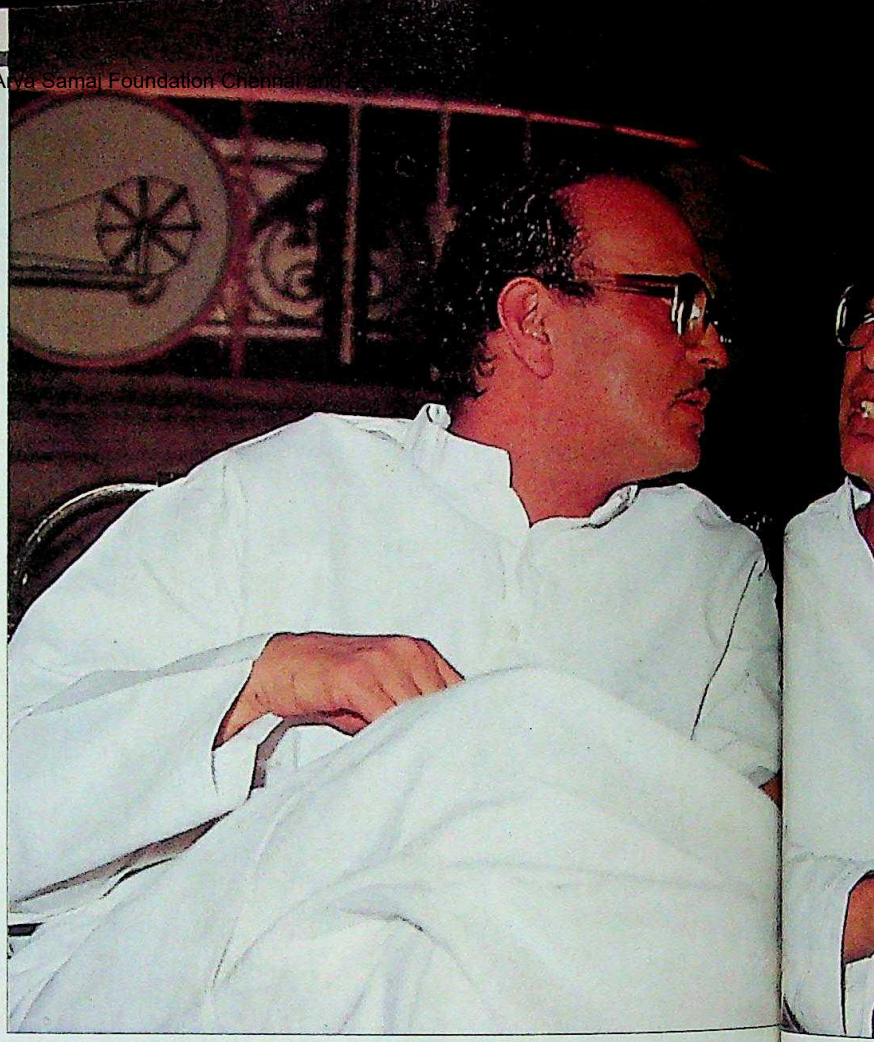
Singh, however, appeared oblivious to the warning signals. Having found his electoral wand, Singh was busy basking in his rediscovered aura of a happy warrior for social change. This was the old V.P. Singh, on a political high and bent on once again seizing the initiative well before the election announcement.

But the negative side to the old Singh were visible as well. The misplaced overconfidence ("We have set the agenda for the coming elections"); ignoring disgruntled colleagues ("A spirit has been expressed at Puri. Let's not dilute it with political games"), a non-existent party infrastructure ("We don't require any. The people are our workers").

Even after Chandra Shekhar met his nemesis in March and elections were announced, the man who had mandalised India seemed ignorant of one vital fact: that his lacklustre performance as prime minister would be a consideration in the voter's mind. Mandal had also blinded him to much else: a growing rift within the party leadership because of his over-dependance on Sharad Yadav and Paswan; the meagre crowds at many of his election rallies; the sympathy factor following the assassination of Rajiv; the disenchantment against his National Front partners: N.T. Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh, Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu and the Left Democratic Front in Kerala; and the party's shrinking base after the November 1990 split.

In the 1989 elections, the united Janata Dal had won 143 Lok Sabha seats and come to power in a unique experiment—the crutches of support from the Right and the Left. After the split, the party's parliamentary strength had dwindled to 75, with an overwhelming number—53—from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. In effect, V.P. Singh's party was now reduced to a regional entity. More important, by banking on Mandal, Singh had severely circumscribed the broadbased appeal he enjoyed in 1989 when wildly cheering crowds of students, professionals and the middle class, cutting across caste and religious barriers, had thronged his rallies.

Thus, to even equal its 1989 electoral harvest required a wave of staggering proportions. Moreover, the party was sorely short of campaign finances and its organisation was in a shambles. But Singh still seemed entrapped in the blissful belief that the lower castes—75 per cent of the population—would rally behind his Mandal banner even though reservations was clearly not an issue in



The tussle at the top exposes the rot within

"I HAVE ALWAYS GIVEN RESPECT TO AJIT. I WANT TO HARMONISE THE PART I HAVE NO EGO PROBLEM.

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h of Singh's thunder. Nor was his
on his side. No national leader who
been reduced to a sectional leader
ever made it back to centre-stage.
What history did record was that the
ata Dal limped home a poor third in
mid-term elections and V.P. Singh's
ge as a sectional leader was rudely
orced with the party winning just
eats predominantly confined to Bi-
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kward bomb had backfired, the Mus-
votes had been split with the
gress(I) and in Bihar it was Laloo
dav's earthy appeal that worked.

The bad news wasn't over. Singh's problems, in fact, were just starting. Having lost his image as a vote-catcher and a master political strategist, the rumblings within the party were now out in the open. Ajit Singh, who had accused Singh of having colluded with Muslim fundamentalists at the expense of secular elements in the party, was pushing strongly for a coalition with the Congress(I). A split was averted but the writing was on the wall.

BARELY two months after the elections, Ajit Singh openly challenged V.P. Singh's leadership in a letter deliberately leaked to the press which squarely blamed Singh for the party's electoral debacle. "You are unwilling to admit that your stewardship of the Government and the party over the last two years had anything to do with the debacle," wrote Ajit. The motivation was obvious: Ajit's nominees had been ignored in the allocation of party posts with the sole exception of Uttar Pradesh where his supporter, Kailash Nath Yadav, had been chosen leader of the state legislature party.

The V.P.-Ajit battle, which eventually featured almost as many episodes as B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharat*—exposed the deeper crisis in the party created by Singh's autocratic ways and his political inflexibility. Other leaders like Biju Patnaik and George Fernandes were becoming openly critical of V.P. Singh. Fernandes even quit his party posts in disgust. More humiliating, its National Front partner, the Telugu Desam, had just announced its unqualified support for Narasimha Rao's by-election debut in Nandyal.

Singh himself did not help matters by his remark that the Janata Dal was "a silly experiment". Though he later shrugged it aside as an off-the-cuff remark, the party was now struggling to keep its head above the political waters. As one senior member, Madhu Limaye, admitted, "It is a ship without direction. Even its credentials as an opposition party are doubtful." In fact, Ajit Singh's revolt was a direct challenge to V.P. Singh's leadership, a sign that the former prime minister was fast losing his political moorings.

The November by-elections only seemed to confirm that impression. By concentrating on Amethi in a bid to ensure the defeat of Congress(I) candidate Satish Sharma, Singh made a serious tactical blunder. He had staked his political reputation on the victory of the Janata Dal candidate. In the event, his candidate not only lost the election but his deposit as well.

Singh's display of bravado in the face of a continuing political downslide is now embarrassing rather than uplifting. The gap between rhetoric and reality is starting to get unbridgeable. If 1987 marked the birth of a leader, 1991 could well symbolise the demise. His handling of the Janata Dal in the last two years has exposed him as an ineffective leader, one whose sanctimonious posturing now has a hollow ring.

It now seems incredible to believe that just a year ago, V.P. Singh was prime minister of the country, so startling and swift has been his political slide. His image as a national figure has crumbled and, despite having out-manoeuvred Ajit Singh, the post-Christmas split in the Janata Dal has literally ruined the party. As Biju Patnaik remarked: "Only a miracle can save the party now." The only remaining weapon in V.P. Singh's arsenal—his reputation as Mr Clean—has been permanently blunted by his failures as a politician and a leader. For having reached where he has—poised precariously over the dustbin of history—Singh has no one to blame but himself. ◆

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MELTDOWN

FOR THE CONGRESS(I), THE EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR SYMBOLISED A POLITICAL MELTDOWN OF HISTORIC CONSEQUENCES, THE END OF DYNASTIC RULE, OF COTERIES AND CABALS. NOW, CONSENSUS RULES.

FROM one-party rule to the opposition benches. Dynastic dominance to democratic functioning. Mr Charisma to Mr Nobody. From the Young to the Old. From coteries and cabals to consensus and consultation. And finally, a minority government. For the once-invincible and monolithic Congress(I), the paroxysms of the recent past fashioned a major metamorphosis, a political meltdown with historic consequences.

None of that seemed remotely predictable when 1991 dawned. Rajiv may have shifted from the imperial ambience of 7, Race Course Road to the secondary surroundings of a Jan Path bungalow, but the party still existed in surreal sameness. The coterie was still in command, the Congress(I) perceived itself as the power behind the throne and the all-pervasive culture of sycophancy remained intact. For the party, after all, Rajiv was not just another opposition leader but a prime minister-in-waiting.

Palace politics had found a place of permanence and its effect on the party was demoralising. The profound sense of unease about the future was now increasingly open and largely justified. The support to Chandra Shekhar's rump government and the distasteful manner it had come to power had already damaged the Congress(I) image. It had also exposed the party's reluctance to face the electorate at a time when its traditional vote-banks were slipping out of its grasp. The upper castes had been coralled by the BJP while the Muslims and large chunks of the backwards were rallying behind V.P. Singh.

Unable to project a nationally credible position on the burning issues of the day, Rajiv, and by extension his party, lacked direction. As he confessed to a close aide in early January: "Look, I've no real solutions on Ayodhya, Punjab or prices. If we couldn't do much with 400 MPs, what do you expect me to do with less than 200?"

But opposition leader status also seemed to have mellowed the man, now showing a more mature side to his political nature. Few months out of power had clearly taught some hard lessons. Increasingly, he was allowing himself to be exposed to the kind of criticism which the coterie had constantly shielded him from. Right from the time 1991 dawned, Rajiv started holding regular meetings with small groups of non-politicians: journalists, businessmen, lawyers, professors, people with no axe to grind who were providing him with the kind of crucial feedback he had been deprived of. He was also more accessible to his own partymen, including ordinary workers. Despite the embarrassment over Rajiv's clumsy attempts to play a role in the Gulf crisis just before the war ended on February 27, the party was visibly recovering from its 1989 debacle.

A TORCH PASSED FROM THE YOUNG TO THE OLD. CHARISMA TO COMPROMISE. 1991 WAS A CATHARTIC YEAR FOR THE CONGRESS(I).

A week later, the growing rift between Rajiv and Chandra Shekhar arrived at its inevitable denouement. Rajiv stuck to his stand that "we never wanted to pull the government down" but Chandra Shekhar's resignation caught the Congress(I) on the wrong electoral foot. A majority of party MPs opposed the decision to face another election and senior partymen like Vasant Sathe initiated moves to avert an election, even suggesting a coalition government with Chandra Shekhar.

The panic was understandable. The party was desperately groping for an electoral plank. Its ambiguous stand on key issues was a serious handicap and its only electoral card was Rajiv's undeniable popularity as a nationally recognised leader. Rajiv, characteristically, exuded cheerful confidence. "We are ready to face the elections," he declared, even as the party resembled a confused and chaotic army being dragged reluctantly to the battlefield.

But that diffidence was to prove temporary. In the surcharged atmosphere which had seen two governments come and go, the Congress(I) had a tailor-made platform—stability. Suddenly, the lessons of 1989 seemed to have finally been heeded. The coterie as well as Rajiv's personal friends and assorted groupies were no longer holding the levers of electoral decision-making.

Rajiv and Narasimha Rao: a dramatic difference

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political secretary Jeetendra Prasad was having his tour programme instead of Mani Shankar Iyer, and in consultation with state party bosses. Former finance minister Pranab Mukherjee was brought in to help draft the manifesto and advise Rajiv on economic issues. And state leaders were being consulted on candidate selection and poll preparations.

THE difference was evident. In contrast to the aggressive, even repugnant, campaign in 1989 which featured posters of scorpions and serpents, the April 1991 blitz was more dignified and subdued. 'Give stability a hand' was clearly an alluring message in the face of 16 months of acute political insecurity and an opposition force divided between the BJP, the National Front and Chandra Shekhar's motley Janata Dal (S). The growing confidence and cohesiveness evident in the party proved it had finally got its act together.

Nothing illustrated that better than the performance of its star campaigner. On the stump, Rajiv seemed like a man reborn. Gone was the arrogance and abusive attacks on opponents. Missing too were the menacing rings of security. Instead, this was a relaxed informal Rajiv, mingling with the people and lending an attentive ear to their problems, even pummelling policemen who tried to keep the crowds at bay.

The change in him was dramatic and compulsive. 1989 had clearly proved a cathartic experience. The *angst* was more in evidence. He now talked openly about his failures, about how he would do things differently and how he understood the system much better now. Here was a man in desperate search of that elusive Second Chance.

Fate, and a suicide bomber, destined it differently. For the country, the shock of Rajiv's assassination on May 21 was traumatic. For the party he had dominated since October 1984, it was apocalyptic. Controlled for 40 years by one family, the Congress party had become psychologically attuned to the concept of a single leader. Obedience, even obeisance, was automatic and ordained. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty had become the party's reference point, the adhesive that held it together. Rajiv's sudden death left a void that appeared impossible to fill.

Indeed, the sordid succession struggle in the immediate aftermath of the assassination seemed to prove the worst

Sonia Gandhi after the Bharat Ratna award ceremony (above); and Pawar with Narasimha Rao

of fears about the coterie on the verge of breaking up. Rajiv's 'orphans'—R.K. Dhawan, Satish Sharma, M.L. Fotedar, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Sitaram Kesari and Rajiv's former Man Friday, Vincent George, known in party circles as the 'caucus', lost no time in trying to foist Sonia Gandhi on to the party as its president. That their backroom conspiracy gained surprising credibility was aided by the party high command's inability to elect a immediate replacement for Rajiv.

Not just the party, the country teetered on the edge of an incredulous fate—the possibility of Rajiv's inexperienced, Italy-born widow becoming India's next prime minister. Arjun Singh informed the Congress Working Committee(CWC) that "the Congress will collapse and the country will break. If

NOT JUST THE PARTY, BUT THE COUNTRY TEETERED ON THE EDGE OF AN INCREDULOUS FATE—THE POSSIBILITY OF SONIA BECOMING INDIA'S NEXT PRIME MINISTER.

we are going to save them both, none other than Soniaji can do it." In the post-assassination atmosphere, no one dared oppose the move. On May 22, a day after the assassination, the CWC elected Sonia as party president. For the party, it was an apocryphal moment. In the event, Sonia saved the situation by issuing a statement the next day declining the offer.

That left the field open for the election of a new leader. As senior partyman Dinesh Singh declared: "We must now decide on a name to rectify the damage done by the undue haste with which the CWC initially decided to ask Sonia Gandhi to take over the reins of the party while the mutilated remains of her husband were still lying before us." The leadership battle was essentially among Sharad Pawar, Arjun Singh, N.D. Tewari and the colourless P.V. Narasimha Rao with Madhavrao Scindia as the darkest of horses. The coterie then played its next card, projecting Sonia as being pro-Narasimha Rao in the leadership race. Once again, it was Sonia who salvaged the situation. After a meeting with Narasimha Rao in mid-June, he issued a statement on her behalf denying her interest in the party elections.

The confusion proved propitious for the party. Pawar decided to back Rao as a stop-gap strategy. Arjun Singh, who had supported Sonia, also ranged behind Narasimha Rao, but mainly to counter Tewari, his main cowbelt rival in a future leadership battle. Other senior leaders quickly followed suit, mainly to stop the powerful Pawar from getting the plum. The result: Narasimha Rao emerged as consensus choice for party president on May 29. But the battle wasn't over. Nor was the caucus contained. They were merely waiting for the next opportunity to strike; the outcome of an interrupted election.

Barely had the election dust settled in end-June and Narasimha Rao elected as head of a minority government, when the coterie played its next card: organising groups of party parliamentarians to meet Sonia with the intention of keeping Rao off balance. Sonia, however, insisted that politics would not be discussed. Emboldened by her stand, it was Narasimha Rao's turn to play his political card. Most coterie-ists were accommodated in the Cabinet but handed unceremonious portfolios. Dhawan, significantly, was kept out in the cold while Pawar was given a key cabinet position.

With that, the Congress(I) entered a new phase in its history—post-dynastic existence. So far, Narasimha Rao has proved a capable successor. A combination of political savvy and experience has allowed him to emerge as a leader in his own right, reinforced by his Nandyal by-election triumph.

More crucial, he has changed the Congress culture from its earlier autocratic avatar to a more democratic and decentralised party where consensus has replaced dictatorial dictats. What has also changed is its monolithic character, rendering it more manageable and cohesive. The process of intra-party elections started in December, which will also elect a new president, will prove a crucial test of how just how cohesive it is. But it is still a party in transition, held together by the public popularity of its leader, Narasimha Rao. Were he, for any reason, to be removed from the scene, the 106-year-old party will once find itself suspended in a dangerous and uncertain limbo. ◆

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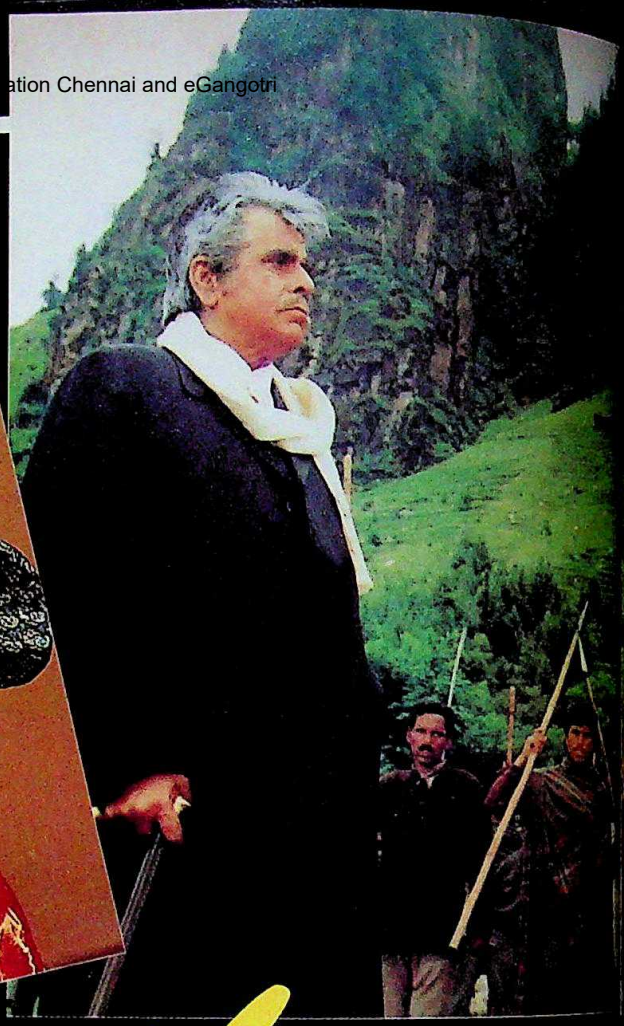

Something

A funny thing happened to Bollywood on its way to 1992. The dream machine had a dream. It dreamt of stardust and supermen and songs that would sprinkle magic on the airwaves. It dreamt of a new breed of stars who would take theatres by storm and karate-kick the video villain into submission. It dreamt of audiences flooding movie halls again and an Alladin's cave of jingling cash registers. Above all, it dared to dream of that *verboten* word—'super hit'. Then, something even stranger happened. Bollywood woke up. And rubbed its eyes in disbelief. The dream had become a reality.

Suddenly, Indian cinema is dancing to a forgotten song—the song of success. Hits have been tumbling out of the turnstiles at an unbelievable rate. *Saajan* and *Saudagar*. *Hum* and *Henna*. *Sanam Bewafa* and *Narasimha*. Not since the Golden Age of Hindi movies in the mid-'70s when *Sholay*, *Zanzeer* and *Deewar* sent film producers prancing all the way to the bank has the Indian film industry registered such a spectacular come-back. *Izzat*. *Phool Bane Angare*. *Prem Qaidi*. *Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin*. *Phool Aur Kante*. The hit list seems endless.

And so is the stable of new stars. Salman and Aamir Khan. Pooja Bhatt and *la* Bedi. Manisha Koirala. Karishma Kapoor. Ajay Devgun. Vivek Mushran. The New Young Things have brought oomph and energy into an industry that was mired in mediocrity and haunted by failures. Throughout the '80s, there was Amitabh. And there was Amitabh. The entire Rs 1,200-crore

(From left) The survivors: Madhuri Dixit; Dilip and Raaj Kumar; Amrita Singh and Amitabh

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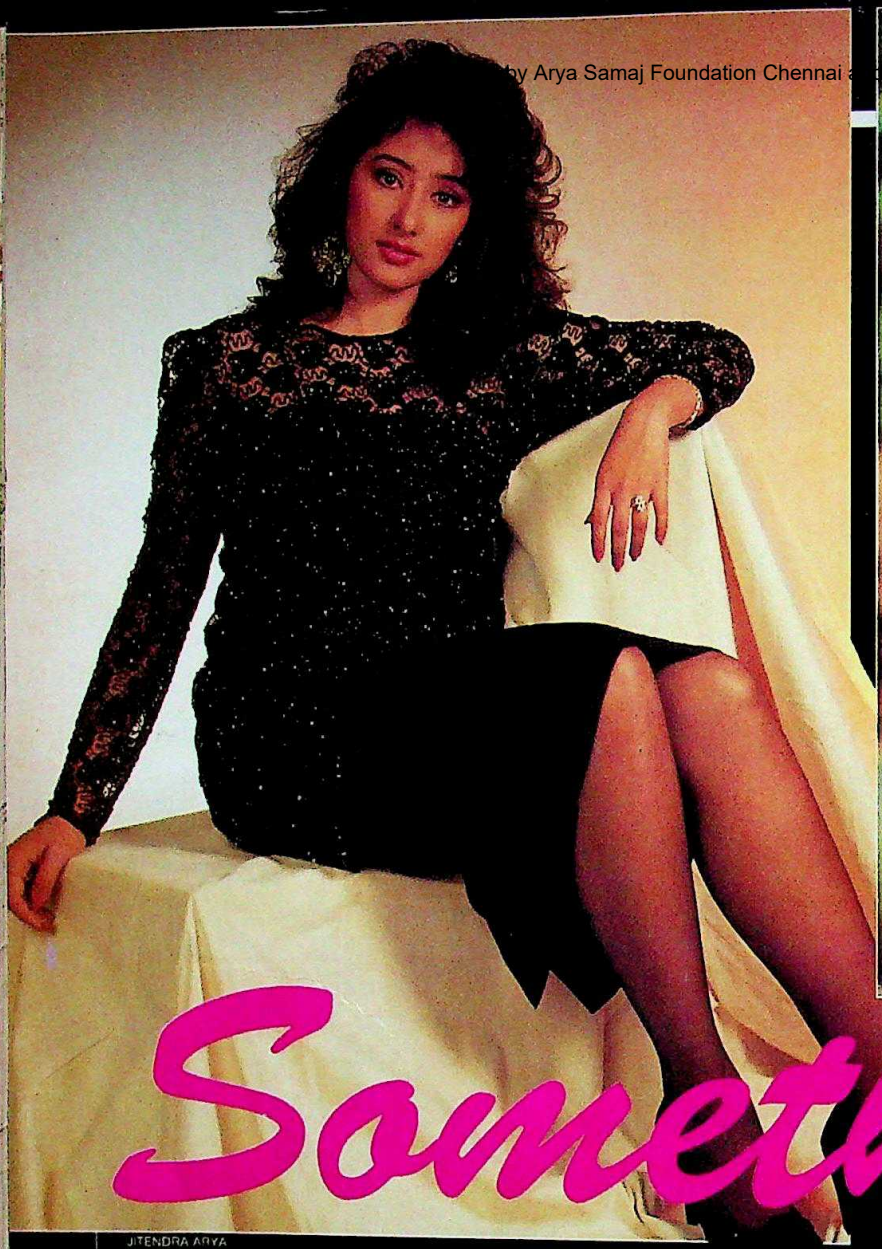

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JITENDRA ARYA

the flops piled up and the glamour and dash were replaced by gloom and doom.

Then came a magical moment. The appropriately named *Maine Pyar Kiya* in 1990 and a fresh young face—Salman Khan. Apart from breaking box-office records it also broke the hoodoo. Suddenly, everyone was falling in love with Hindi cinema all over again. The audiences were back and so were the hits. 1991 has produced at least 10 major box-office successes and the mood in the industry has never been so upbeat. As a spokesman of Bombay's Guild of Exhibitors puts it: "We're back in business."

And how. The hit parade that reached torrential proportions in 1991 shows no signs of slowing down. The nightmare of 1986 lasted through four years of drought but now there's a new dream dawning. Or rather, an old dream dressed up in a dazzling new costume.

Maine Pyar Kiya contained no radical new formula. It was a Mills & Boon-type teenage romance but the faces were new and the music had a finger-snapping quality which grabbed the imagination of a generation. The mix was mesmeric. Young love and catchy music.

BUT it was also an idea whose time had come. Indian Cinema had grown old. And tired. And trite. The same faces had dominated the marquees for too long and the frenetic attempts to ring the formula changes had brought box-office disaster at a time when video was in ascendancy and a string of popular

(From left) Bursting into the limelight: Manisha; Pooja and Aamir; Salman and Bhagyashree

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Doordarshan serials was keeping the audiences at home. The 90s changed all that. Television, thanks to some uninspiring fare, lost its appeal. Video had become passe. And expensive. And also presumptuous. The unending avalanche of animated advertisements now covered virtually half the small screen.

Then, Cable TV came along and threatened to carry on where video had left off. But it wound up having the opposite effect. The generally poor quality of prints and the off-putting advertisements only reinvented the urge for 70 mm and full

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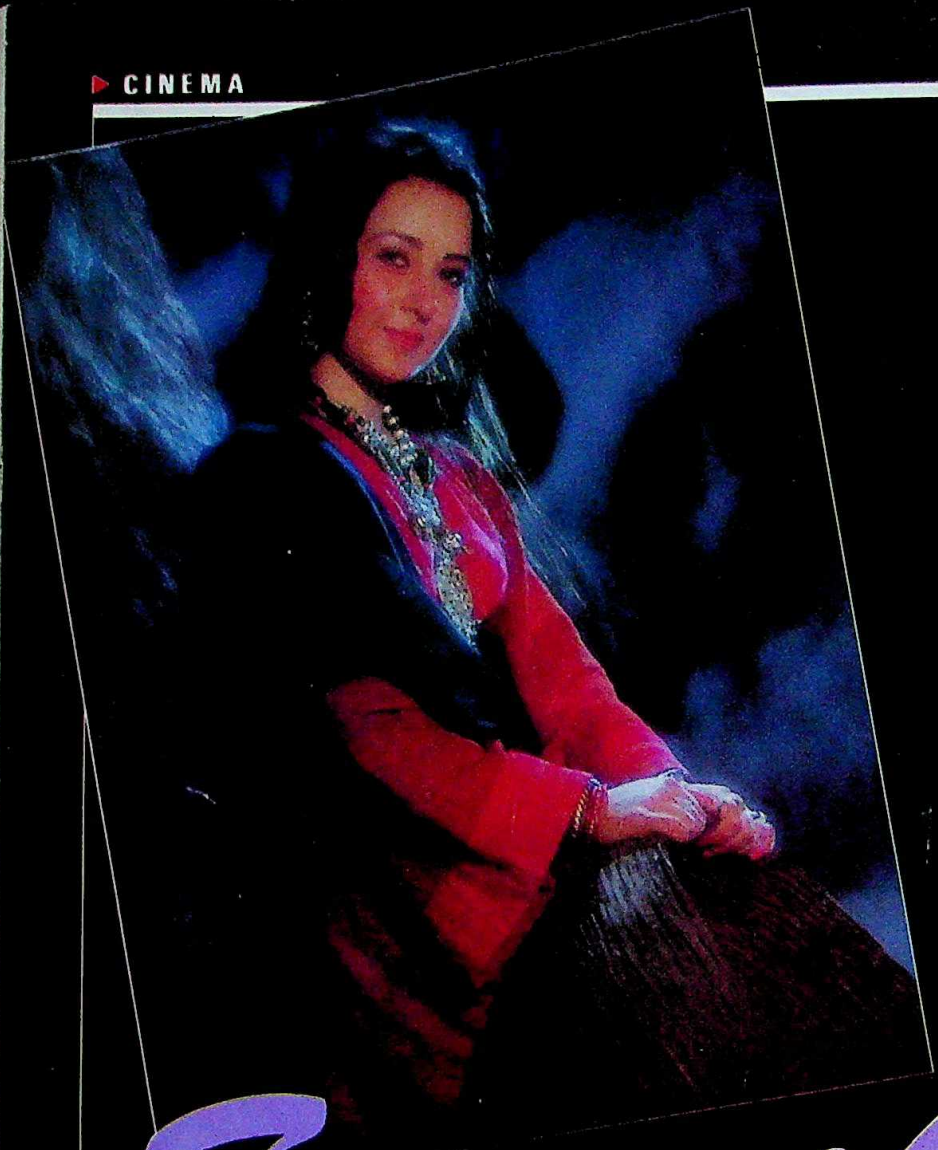

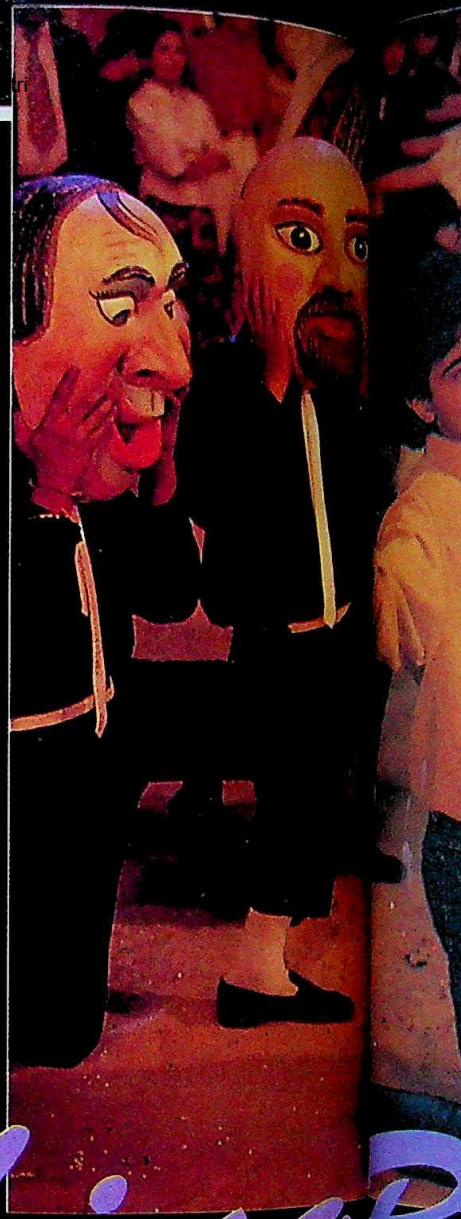

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stereo sound. And popcorn and people. Meanwhile, the more adventurous theatre owners had spruced up cinema halls and introduced new sales gimmicks to lure back the audiences.

THE industry was quick to respond to the coincidental changes. Earlier in the year it had introduced a self-imposed ceiling—12—on the number of films any one star could sign, a decision that opened up the field for the new faces waiting in the wings. Now was the time to bring them centre-stage. Cocky, brash and often brazen, the teenage heart-throbs brought with them not a whiff, but a hurricane of fresh air. They also brought variety.

The range of stars in the top ten hits of 1991 illustrate the point. Salman Khan (*Saajan, Sanam Bewafa*); Aamir Khan and Pooja Bhatt (*Dil Hai Ke Manta Nahin*); Karishma Kapoor and Harish (*Prem Qaidi*); Jackie Shroff and Sangeeta Bijlani (*Izzat*); Sunny Deol and Ravi Behl (*Narasimha*); Zeba Bakhtiyar (*Henna*); Manisha Koirala (*Saudagar*) and Ajay Devgun (*Phool Aur Kante*). The only stalwarts in the hit squad have been Amitabh (*Hum*); Rajnikant and Rekha (*Phool Bane Angare*) and the virtuoso performance by Dilip Kumar and Raaj Kumar in *Saudagar*.

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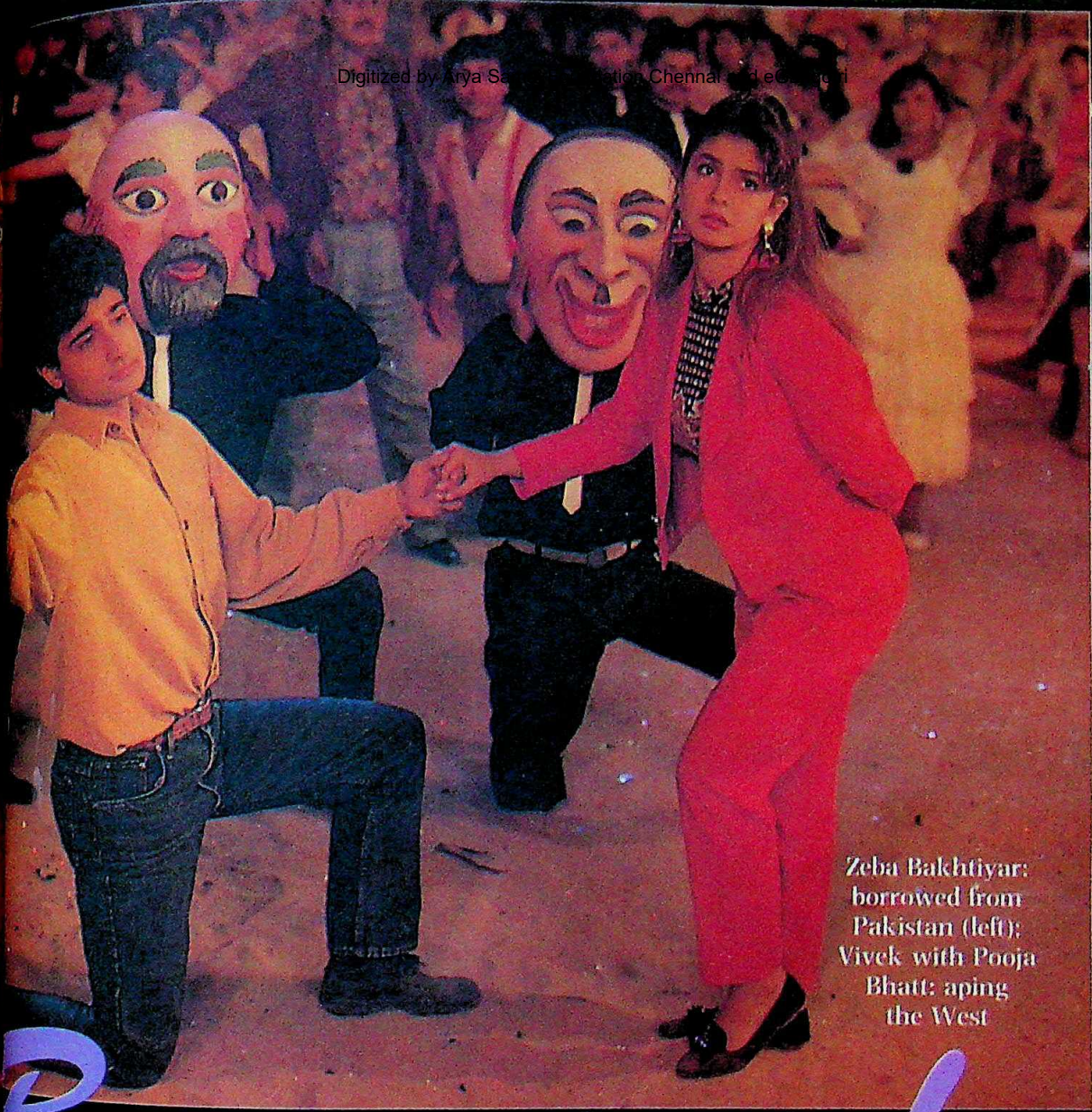

Zeba Bakhtiyar: borrowed from Pakistan (left); Vivek with Pooja Bhatt: aping the West

Borrowed...

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right. It was back to the future. Romance had always been the staple diet of the industry. So had music. And dance. Only the premium had changed. The accent was now on youth. Amitabh was no longer credible as a young Arthario. Nor was Vinod Khanna or any of the other ageing stars of yesteryear. The story-line was now simpler, sans the traditional frills of villains and vamps and mind-numbing twists in the plot. Blood-and-gore also died a natural death. Perhaps there was too much of it in daily life. Now, the violence is almost a ballet and much of it is fun rather than repulsive.

Even the music is tuned to youthful exuberance. Peppy and pulsating, it made music directors the new stars of the industry in 1991 and the string of big hits proved that music was truly the food of love—and success. Much of the box-office bonanza harvested over the year revolved around hit songs from the films. It also provided a windfall for the music industry which was now releasing cassettes of film scores even before the movie was released.

With the new bubble-gum music came a new kind of dance. Bold, brassy and modern, dance scenes became an essential ingredient in the new films. Dance masters like Chinni Prakash and Saroj Khan were more in demand than the stars

Something B

themselves as choreography attained new heights. Madhuri Dixit's iconic *Ek Do Teen* number in *Teezab* and the chart-busting *Jumma Chumma* in *Hum* set the trend and everyone else, literally, fell in line.

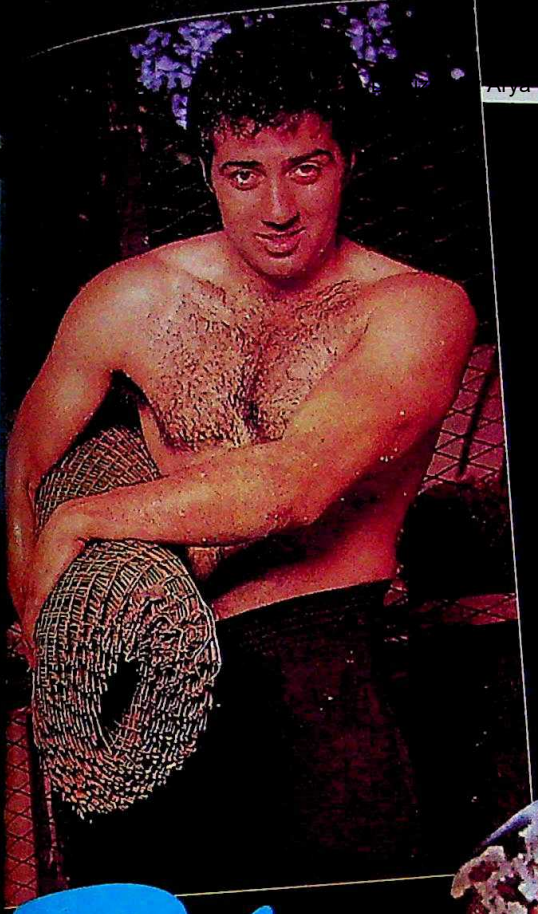
Much of the successful ingredients of 1991 were clearly borrowed from Hollywood. The music and dance numbers certainly, based on western music videos *a la* Michael Jackson and M.C. Hammer. Randhir Kapoor even borrowed a Pakistani actress, Zeba, for *Henna*, with considerable success. But despite the plagiarism, the result was what cinema was born to provide—pure, unadulterated entertainment.

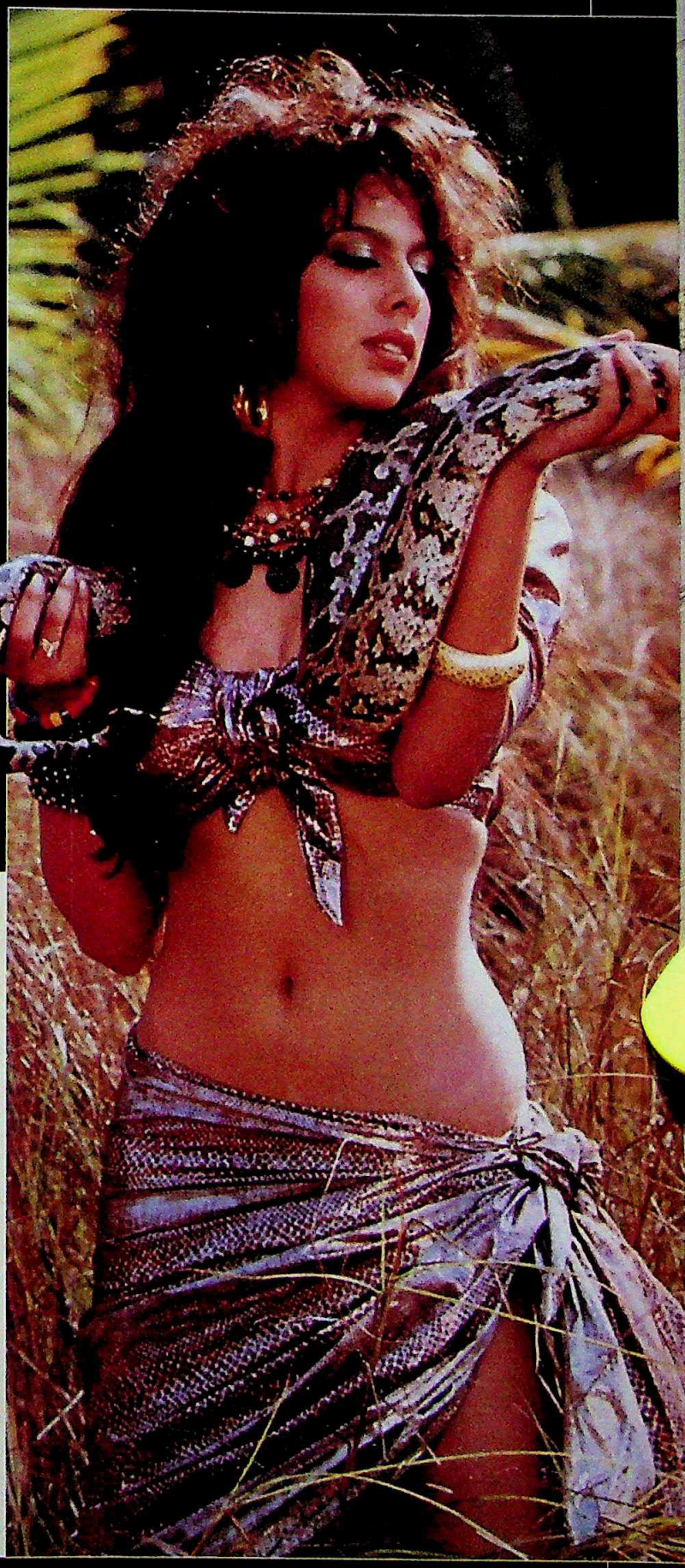
But obviously it is the attractive vitality of the young stars that has triggered the revival of 1991. Confident and clean-cut, most are in their early 20s and obsessed with physical fitness—regular work-outs and private gyms. They also come cheaper than the pampered pantheon of yesteryear. And they are hard working and need less of the ego-massaging that earlier stars demanded as their right. The boy-next-door image of Salman or Aamir Khan and the star quality of a Karishma Kapoor and Pooja Bhatt is clearly an irresistible combination. As producer-director Raj Kohli points out: "The new generation wants films full of life and energy. Raw energy."

RAW is also sexy. Symbolised by the irrepressible Pooja Bedi and Shilpa Shirodkar and macho males like Chunky Pandey, Sunjay Dutt and Sunny Deol, cinema was getting increasingly explicit. There was certainly more flesh on display and many of the dances wore a suggestive sensuality. Sunjay Dutt sums up attitudes when he says: "If you have a great body, what's wrong in flaunting it?"

And flaunt it they did. But they also did it in style. Pooja Bedi's outrageous life-style and her declared ambition to "be the sexiest

(From left) Shilpa Shirodkar; Sunny Deol; Pooja Bedi: celluloid fantasies come out of the closet





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man in Hindi cinema" may have raised a few
brows. But nobody could deny that the lady
d class. And drive. And a body worth flaunt-
g. The go-getting image of the young stars
s perhaps, their most endearing quality. This
s a breed with no inhibitions and also no
sions about the transitory nature of its
rdom. As Salman Khan confessed to a trade
gazine recently: "Let four of my films flop
d I'll be out of business."

Eventually, the flops may have outnum-
ed the hits but with the industry churning
t 900 films this year (the last time annual
duction crossed 900 was back in 1985), that
omewhat inevitable. But for now, the opti-
m in the industry is reflective of the good
es ahead. After more than a decade, there
new number one male star—Salman Khan—
d a new buoyancy and bounce in Indian
ema. What the year wound up proving once
in was that there is really no business like
w business.

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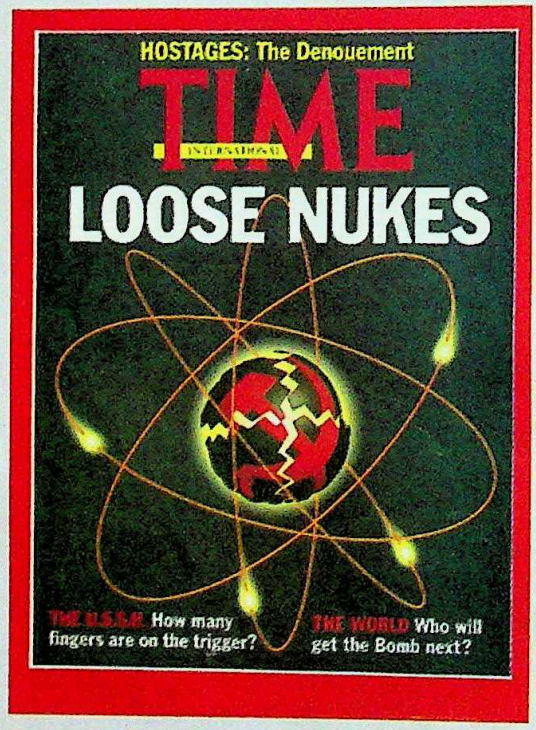

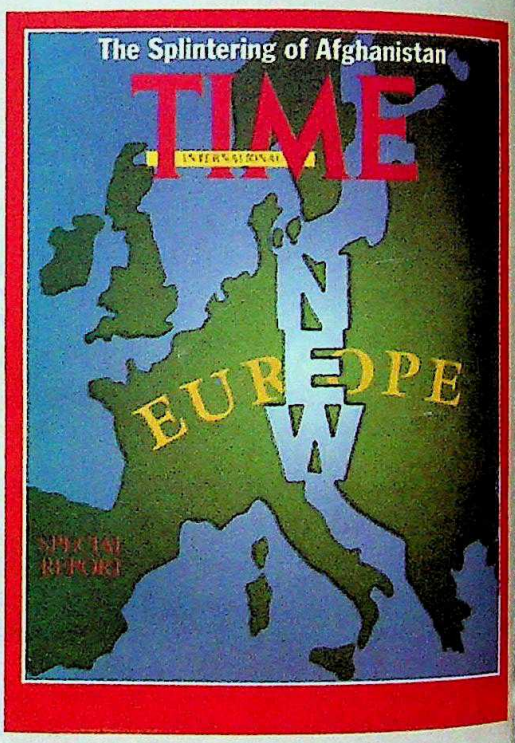

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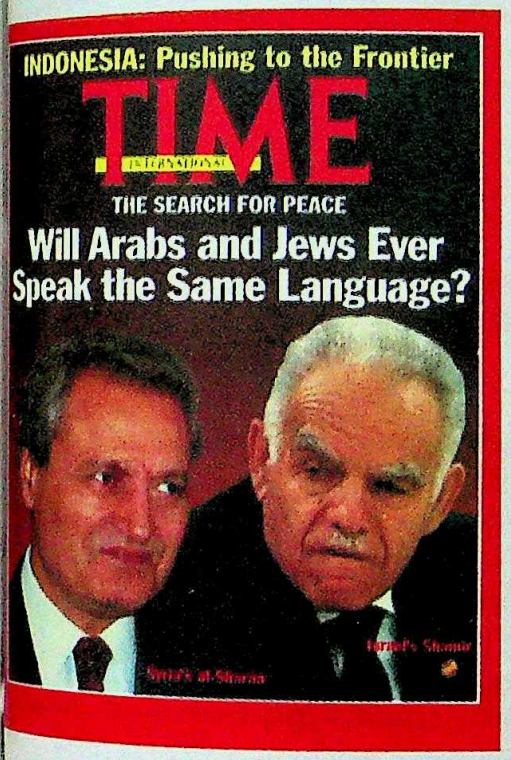
THINK !



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MERAJ-UD-DIN

IN TERMS OF THE BODY COUNT, THE TOLL WAS STILL FEARFUL. HOSTAGE-TAKING BECAME FASHIONABLE BUT SO DID HOSTAGES, ONE OF WHOM WOUND UP ADVERTISING DETERGENTS ON TELEVISION. TERRORISM WAS STARTING TO BORDER ON THE BIZARRE.

ONE day a hostage, the next, a celebrity plugging detergents on television. One day, a well-coordinated, cohesive struggle for separatism. The next, a melange of extortionists, highwaymen and rival groups battling for supremacy. One day, hysterical local support for a fledgling extremist movement threatening a sensitively located state. The next, sueing for peace. That paradoxical panorama summed up the text of terrorism in 1991 as separatism completed its first decade of existence in India.

After more than 10 years of bloodshed and turmoil, the balance sheet of its history is not so spectacularly successful. The face of Indian terrorism in 1991 may have still been fearsome but its contours have changed and so too, the motivation. As K. Doraiswamy—the Indian Oil director abducted by extremists in Kashmir and now advertising detergents on prime time television—showed, terrorism has started to border on the bizarre. It also, most demonstratably, was bloody and destructive. But for the first time, it wore a definable air of desperation.

True, thousands have been slain including two prime ministers. Large areas of Kashmir and Punjab remain outside the pale of state control and the ability to wreak havoc and mass destruction is still extant. But undoubtedly that dubious advantage has been predominantly achieved by the obsessive support from Islamabad, a support now starting to prove diplomatically unaffordable.

Moreover, terrorism's debit column is equally in the red. Despite the kind of money, weaponry, training and strategic support provided by Pakistan, the terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir are nowhere closer to their goal of separatism than they were when their respective battles against the state were joined. More crucial, the separatist movement in both states have clearly lost the kind of mass support from the local population it enjoyed initially.

ASSAM

LOSING MOMENTUM AND SETTLING FOR PEACE

THE most telling example is the ULFA movement in Assam. Barely two years ago, it sprang to headline-grabbing attention with its ability to operate at will, mainly because of the overwhelming support from the local population. In November 1990, it forced a popularly-elected government out of office. The imposition of President's Rule one week later and Operation Bajrang launched by the army failed to make headway, again because of local support.

Then came elections in June and suddenly, the rules changed. The election itself was surprisingly peaceful. The Congress(I) came back to power and the first signs of desperation in ULFA's ranks surfaced. One day after the new

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SAIBAL DAS

BY KILLING HOSTAGES AND CAUSING ECONOMIC HARDSHIP, ULFA'S POPULAR SUPPORT DRIBBLED AWAY. THE ARMY OFFENSIVE IN SEPTEMBER PUT IT UNDER PRESSURE AND CONSEQUENTLY THE OUTLAWED ORGANISATION HAD TO SUE FOR PEACE.

government took office, 14 officials of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission were taken hostage. The subsequent killing of three hostages, including a Soviet mining engineer marked the turning point. ULFA's extortionist demands on businessmen had already crippled the state's economy. Now, the public exposure of its more brutal face drained away much of the public backing it fed on.

The results were dramatic. Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia's amnesty announcement in July and the subsequent release of ULFA activists in captivity put the onus on the organisation. By rejecting the olive branch offered by Saikia, ULFA lost further face. Another army offensive—Operation Rhino—was launched on September 14, this time under changed circumstances. Under pressure and robbed of the security of local support, the organisation finally sued for peace.

PUNJAB

BLOOD ON THE STREETS, POLLS ON THE HORIZON

PUNJAB, of course, is in a different league. Islamabad's overt support has given it sustenance and staying power. The body count remains remorselessly high. Over 6,000 people killed in terrorist-related violence in Punjab alone during 1991, almost double the count in 1990. But so also was the figure of terrorists gunned down in 1991 in the state; 4,500 compared to 2,400 in 1990. More crucial, the defiance was diluted by the kind of terrorist targets now in vogue and the growing rivalry between splinter groups.

The year did start on a dangerous note with Simranjit Singh Mann submitting a memorandum to prime minister Chandra Shekhar demanding the "right of self-determination for Sikhs." The memorandum exposed the covert negotiations the Government had initiated with Punjab militants. Even Chandra Shekhar admitted that the talks had "sent out wrong signals".

But eventually it turned out to be the quixotic Mann who was sending out the wrong signals with his February 8 offer to the American ambassador in New Delhi to send "lakhs of Sikhs who are ready to join US ranks on the battlefield." The absurdity of the proposal symbolised Mann's declining stature in Punjab, a state he had once straddled like a collosus. As it was, his sword-waving antics outside Parliament, which had prevented him from taking the oath as a member, had caused more ridicule than alarm.

Despite that, the prospects for elections in the state increased with the Governor O.P. Malhotra, recommending that both Lok Sabha and assembly elections be held. One month later, on April 11, the Government ratified Malhotra's recommendation. The attempt on the life of minister of state for home, Subodh Kant Sahay, on June 7, en

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SHARAD SAXENA

SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN'S SLIDE TO RELATIVE OBSCURITY AND HIS SWORD-WAVING ANTICS SYMBOLISED THE DISARRAY IN THE RANKS OF THE PUNJAB MILITANTS. THE TARGETS ARE INCREASINGLY SOFTER AND THE CRY FOR KHALISTAN MORE MUTED.

route to file his nominations for the Ludhiana Lok Sabha constituency, highlighted the dangers. By June 19, 25 candidates had been gunned down.

But Punjab was once again to be denied political breathing space. On June 20, the day polling was to begin, Punjab awoke to radio announcements that the state elections had been postponed. The decision, by Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan, was clearly controversial. Chandra Shekhar dubbed it a "dangerous move" and Governor Malhotra quit in disgust.

HOWEVER the doomed poll exercise had succeeded in one aspect. The political rivalry which had splintered the Akalis into fractious factions was now visible in the militant ranks as well. Extortion and ransom was increasingly the norm—and the motivation was mainly cash and not a cause. The result: the image and credibility of the militants took a beating. Out in the countryside, the call for Khalistan was increasingly muffled and lacked the kind of mass support witnessed before and immediately after Operation Bluestar.

In 1991, the movement had no recognizable and credible leader. Instead, a plethora of groups and gangs—"rag-tag killer outfits" as Akali leader Amarinder Singh calls them—engaged in fighting each other for supremacy. It was also a movement fast losing direction and motivation. Nothing demonstrated that more forcefully than the choice of soft targets—innocent, defenceless civilians sprayed by passing vehicles, time bombs in crowded marketplaces and unarmed passengers in trains. And, for the first time, police personnel and their families.

That particular trend may have been alarming but it was also a knee-jerk reaction to the strategy adopted by the state; to undermine the morale of key terrorists by targeting their families. The fact that there are less examples of fanatical acts of terrorism—attacks on heavily-guarded security installations, senior police officials or attempts to take over the Golden Temple, as was the case earlier, is one indication that the motivation is starting to flag. More significant, the initial terrorist-inspired alienation between the Hindus and the Sikhs is now clearly a thing of the past.

The two-stage army deployment in Punjab, the first just prior to the June elections and Operation Rakshak-II on November 20, also put added pressure on the militants. One unwelcome result was that terrorists shifted their activity outside Punjab, mainly in the vulnerable Terai area of Uttar Pradesh. The flurry of post-November killings and bomb explosions in the Terai belt, including the Rudrapur bomb blast on Dussehra-eve in which 70 people died, may have created a major security problem but it also showed signs of

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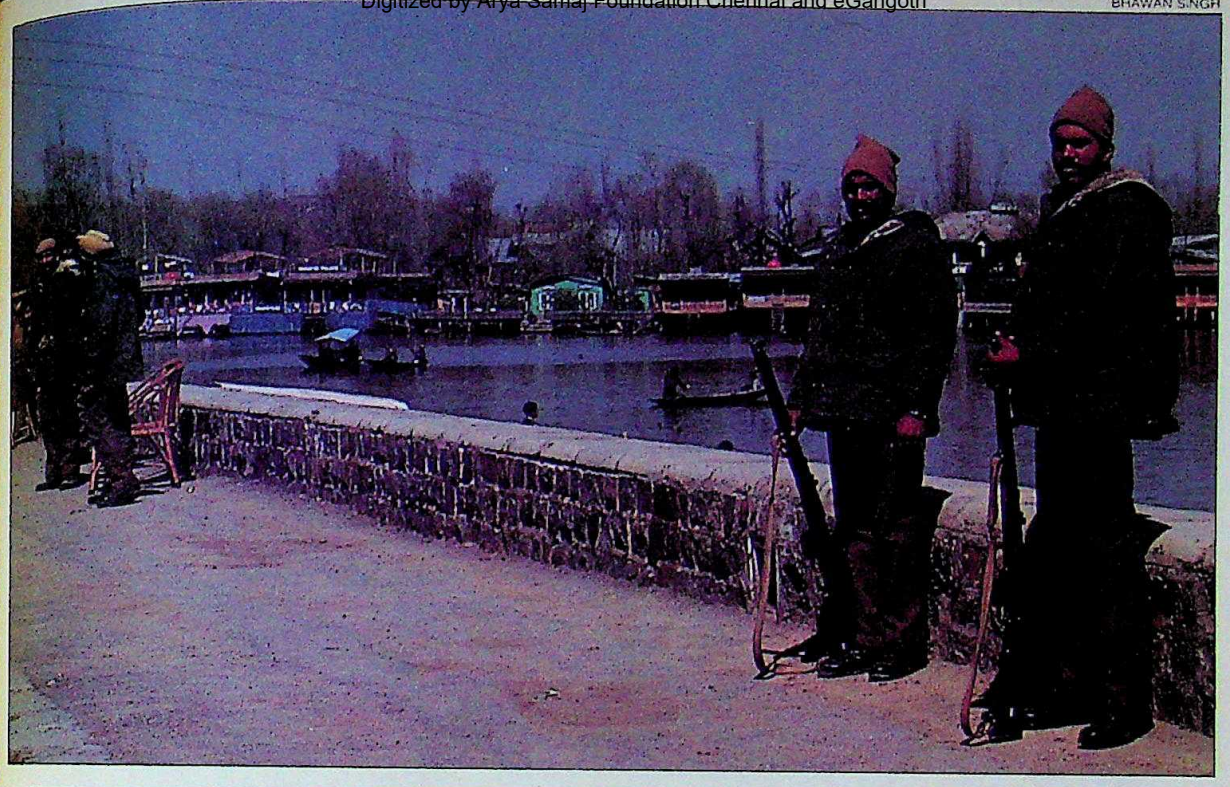
BHAWAN SINGH



AN INTERNECINE BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY AND LOSS OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT CRIPPLES THE SEPARATIST MOVEMENT EVEN MORE THAN ITS CRIPPLING OF NORMAL LIFE IN THE VALLEY. EVEN HOSTAGE-TAKING WAS STARTING TO BOOMERANG.

desperation. Rich Sikh landowners in the area are providing money and shelter to the militants. However, there is a crucial difference—it is at gunpoint and under threat, and not willing, unquestioned support for a movement that is awry, disorganised and increasingly, in public disgrace.

The Centre's determination to gamble with state elections in February is, equally, a sign that it sees it as an opportune time to restore political activity in the state. But whether it goes through with the elections is the crucial question on which hinges the future of Punjab.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

AT A CONFUSING CROSSROAD

THE Kashmir crisis is clearly more complex. For Islamabad, it is infinitely more important than Punjab. History, tradition, psychological mind-set, the state's Muslim character and its emotive domestic political appeal has turned Pakistan's support for Kashmir militants into a jingoistic *jihad*. Thus, in terms of its threat to the security of the state, Kashmir easily wears the most frightening face. Two years of President's Rule with its oppressive security and a totally discredited political leadership in the state had opened up the Valley to extremist dominance. The year's dawn was bleak and bloody. The first week of January saw hundreds of militants striding the streets of Srinagar, firing Kalashnikov's into the air and defiantly setting fire to the national flag. The exodus by Hindu families continued.

The omens were disturbing enough to reduce the Republic Day function to a farce; not a single Kashmiri official dared to show up at the Bakshi stadium and the ceremony was hastily concluded after an embarrassing 15 minutes. Outside, gun battles between security forces and militants held centre-stage. More than 1,225 people had died in security-related violence the previous year. And 1991 promised to be even bloodier. The newly-appointed Governor, Girish 'Gary' Saxena, displayed a refreshing degree of honesty when he publicly admitted that the "situation is very grim." That the body count was eventually not excessively higher—around 1,400 till mid-December, said more about the state of the movement than any movement by the state.

The change, when it came, was subtle but significant. On February 19, an outlawed organisation, the staunchly pro-Pakistan Jamaat-I-Islami, offered to hold talks with prime minister Chandra Shekhar. It was an unprecedented development in the history of Kashmir militancy. Though the conditionalities attached to the talks were unacceptable, it was a volte face that would eventually expose the growing rifts in the militant movement. Less than a week later, came another signal; the potentially explosive abduction and subsequent release of Nahida Imtiaz, daughter of National Conference former MP Saifuddin Soz. Both events combined to showcase the sudden, internecine struggle for leadership of the secessionist movement.

The Jamaat had been steadily losing out in popularity to the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) which had been promising a state independent of both India and Pakistan. The offer of talks, thus, was widely seen as an

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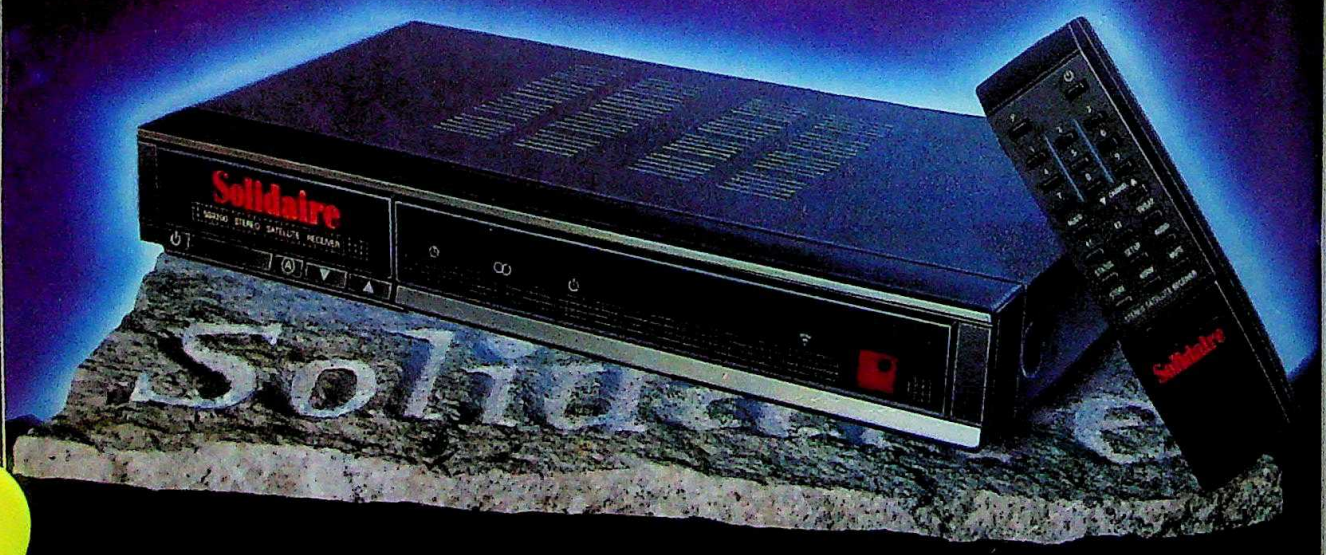

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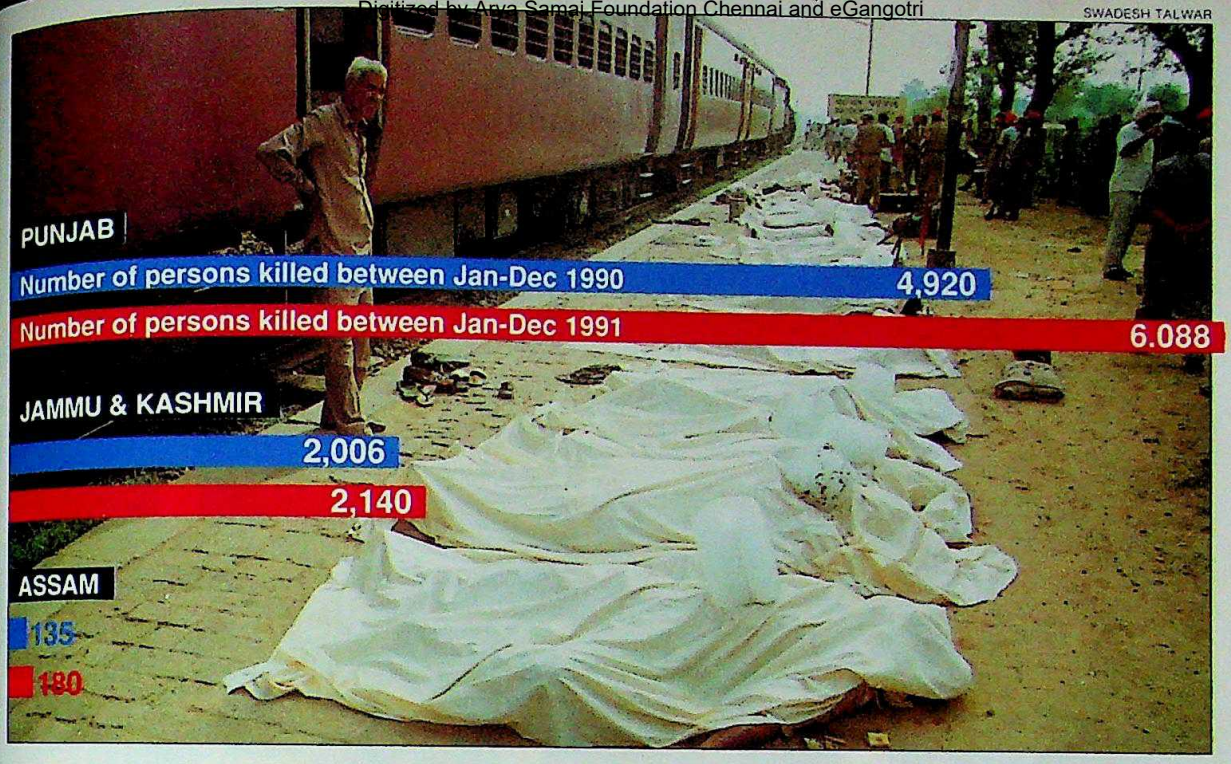

OVERALL, 1991 MAY HAVE BEEN NO LESS DESTRUCTIVE IN TERMS OF THE BODY BAGS BUT THE FACE OF TERRORISM APPEARED TO BE LESS AWESOME THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE LAST DECADE. THE LOSS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT WAS A SIGNIFICANT SETBACK.

attempt by the organisation to usurp the leadership of the movement. The Nahida kidnapping, by the little-known Jammu and Kashmir Students' Liberation Front (JKSLF), established the struggle more forcefully. Major militant groups like the Hizbul-Mujahedin and JKLF demanded Nahida's unconditional release. Coming as it did barely a few days after the Jamaat grabbed headlines with its offer of talks, it translated into a bid by the organisation to bring itself into the limelight and seize the vacant leadership position.

There were other subtle signs that the movement was losing popular support by its own intransigence and internal battles. Muslims brickbatted militants when they tried to shut down two Hindu shops in downtown Srinagar. No longer did thousands of Kashmiris throng the streets raising slogans of *'azadi'*. Schools and shops were open more often than shut. Clearly, the hardships faced by the common man—the succession of strikes, food shortages and the sharp economic crunch created by the cessation of tourism—had built up tremendous resentment and rancour. Finally, Kashmir militancy was going the Punjab way, with a significant increase in plain criminal extortion and kidnappings for ransom.

But it was another abduction—of two Swedish nationals on April 1—that hit the movement the hardest. The kidnappers this time were the Muslim Janbaaz Force (MJF), another comparatively obscure outfit looking for attention-grabbing headlines. If the avowed intention was to "draw the world's attention to the Kashmir problem" it succeeded, but not in the way the MJF had planned. The United Nations demanded the immediate release of the hostages as did the Swedish Government. For the movement, the lack of international support was a major blow. Worse was to follow. The US and Britain issued statements condemning terrorism in the Indian context and also, indirectly, Islamabad's involvement. The attempted abduction of Israeli tourists, on June 27, only added to the pressure. The Israelis were quickly released and the two Swedes shortly after.

INCREASED international pressure was, in fact, the most striking feature of the year in the context of terrorism in India. The sensational abduction of Liviu Radu, the Romanian charge d'affaires, from his New Delhi residence in early October, was a case in point. Kidnapped by members of the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF) with the aim of drawing world attention to their "mission", the ploy backfired badly. Romania took a firm stand in refusing the kidnappers demands—the release of KCF militants captured in Bucharest after an attack on Indian ambassador Julio Ribeiro.

Radu's anti-climactic release 49 days after his abduction, without any demands having been conceded by the Romanian or Indian Government, was a major setback to the militant movement. For once, the Indian Government had taken a tough stand, refusing to bow to subsequent demands, namely the release of Sikh militants involved in the killing of former army chief General A.S. Vaidya.

Overall, 1991 may have been no less deadly and destructive in terms of the body count. But the loss of local support and the simultaneous rise in international pressure are equally significant factors. With Assam on the road to peace, the face of terrorism in 1991 appeared to be less awesome than at any time in the last decade. ◆

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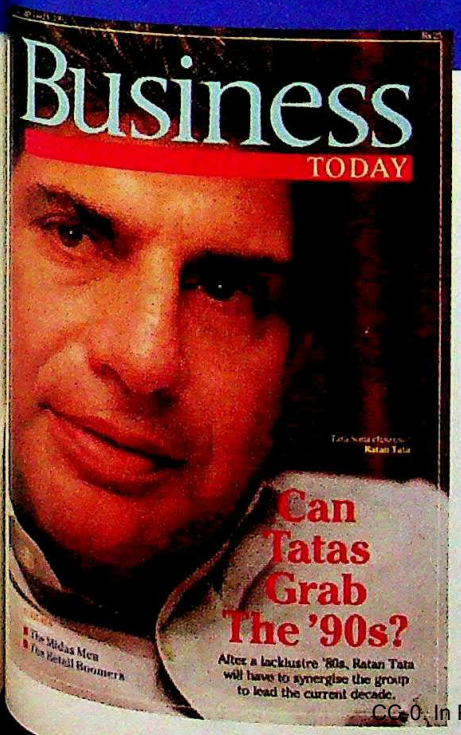

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Going Broke, Going A'begging and Going for Broke

Illustrations by PRANAB DUTTA

HOPE. Helplessness. Hype. Perhaps nothing describes the 1991 economic situation better than these three words. You could try other sets: problems, prognosis and procrastination. Or excess, exhilaration and expediency. In the end, it all means the same thing.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh have had to see, realise and do all these things in equal measure to get India by the scruff of its neck and try to lift it out of the morass. With the burden of debt, an unslaked foreign exchange thirst, moribund industrial and tax laws, an overbearing bureaucracy, the licence-permit raj, very real infrastructural constraints and a totally unreal view of the world around us.

The economic reform package orchestrated by the duo has taken care of some of the problems. But the level of achievement is pretty low. Admittedly, the Congress(I) Government has been around for just half-a-year and the political price to be paid is heavy. But time and money are at a premium and it is all the more crucial that the Government go full throttle with reform, never mind the pain. Even if it hurts, the system needs cleansing. That is the lesson learnt in 1991. And the message for 1992.

THE CRISIS

YOU have to pay up sometime. Besides, four decades of stilted policies and five years of stupidity can come down pretty heavy on a blissfully profligate economy. And so it has. Consider the following:

FOREIGN DEBT: $71 billion, or Rs 1,83,180 crore. A result of borrowing hand-over-fist to fund, among other useful things, useless imports, questionable defence equipment, pay out millions of dollars for politicians' junkets, oil—of which, a lot

1981 '82 '83 '84 '85 '86

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ore could have been pumped at home with ortless foresight. A mad rush to get money any hich way, so much so, that when long-term ance dries up, pick up high interest, short-term oney. The payback is heavier, but that's another gime's problem. The foreign debt situation uld have got worse by end-1991 to about $80 lion—don't wait for government figures, by the e they are released, real-time debt would have reased. And don't forget that if the foreign change situation looks better now, it's because borrowings, not as much from export receipts d foreign investments.

EFICIT: Receipts have not matched expectans. They couldn't have. While the devaluation lped increase customs collecns in rupee terms, they have opped ultimately because im-

ENDITURE
get Estimate
ted to increase

rters had to pay so much more nks to import curbs that they cked off. The result: a shortfall. us, excise collections have opped because industry is in a ueeze, is producing less and lling less. Total revenue excted to be lost: over Rs 3,500 ore. The Government is so desrate that it has recently inreased the price of rice and wheat pplied through the public disbution system, in a bid to rece its subsidy pressure, but ere is Rs 30,000 crore or so in ss subsidies still floating ound. The Government also d it will sell off parts of public ctor units—it's another story at nothing has been done about The aim is to reduce the budget ficit to 6.5 per cent of the GDP, or 7,719 crore. Forget it. "Unubtedly," said economist P. hmananda as far back as end 90, "the economy is facing its rst fiscal crisis." It still is.

FLATION: The target is 9 per nt a year by the end of March, but indices only move up. "What is worrying is that inflation is up despite a good monsoon," says R.N. Malhotra, former RBI governor. It is: agricultural prices, the last to be hit, have increased by as much as 30 per cent. Money supply, which the Government has tried to keep in check by imposing severe credit curbs—simply, increasing the cost of money that a borrower has to pay a bank—has not been felt yet. Perhaps it is because more black money is coming into the system, but it has had a contra effect: money supply is growing at 12.1 per cent a year according to latest figures, and has increased by almost Rs 20,000 crore to over Rs 2,90,000 crore between June and October 1991.

With the budget deficit getting out of hand, the Government may be forced to print more money and therefore, bring more into the system. The final result: more inflation.

There's more to the crisis, but these three are the key areas. Together, they play havoc with exports—inflation has practically nullified the devaluation benefit for making Indian exports more price competitive. Export growth has slowed down. Rising prices and a credit squeeze have knocked industrial growth so much that it's dipping—there is negative growth. And the economy, which bears the final burden of all policy, is slowing down too. The Government expected a 5-per cent growth, it will probably get 3.5 per cent.

If anybody tells you the worst is over, please remember there's such a thing as relative values. Things are a little better than rock-bottom. But in 1992, India may actually get there.

—SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI

THE GOVERNMENT IS LIVING WELL BEYOND ITS MEANS. THIS IS INCREASING THE FISCAL DEFICIT WHICH IS NOW Rs 38,475 CRORE.

TO MAKE ENDS MEET IT BORROWS MORE AND PRINTS MORE MONEY...

...IN THE BARGAIN IT HAS BECOME INDEBTED TO THE TUNE OF Rs 171,635 CRORE AT HOME AND OWES MORE THAN THIS AMOUNT TO LENDERS ABROAD.

REVENUE
Budget Estimate
Expected to decrease

Rs crore
1,00,000
80,000
60,000
40,000
20,000

'88 '89 '90 '91 '92

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THE HOT SEAT

AS I grow older," he says, "I become more humble." This is vintage Manmohan Singh, anybody who has ever met him will tell you that. The man is gentle, modest—and calm. Remarkably.

Which is a bit surprising, as he is in the hot seat, which is getting hotter by the day. Being a finance minister isn't easy at the best of times and over the year, the times for India have been anything but that. "The economy had slipped badly," says Singh. And his job: set the scales right, drag India out of economic gloom, recession and debt.

That's just a small part of being in the hot seat. The temperature will rise appreciably when he pushes through with the promised reforms, and there is a very real danger of a meltdown. Until now, the 59-year-old Oxbridge-educated economist with a socialist bent of mind has orchestrated only very minor policy changes. Minor in relation to what he needs to do—totally overhaul the system—and minor in terms of political cost to the Government. Half a year is little time to take on this country's system and get away with it. But Singh has settled in; it helped to have as mentor another quick understudy: Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

Consider what the man in the hot seat has done, and how he has gone about it. The mission: change, or the world and its money will pass you by. The strategy: use global integration as a gimmick to loosen controls on industry, trade—only exports, imports are squeezed out with little money in the forex kitty—and foreign investment. And quickly counter the Singh-loves-the-rich criticism with a budgetary and political snow job par excellence.

A nominal cut in fertiliser subsidy—backtrack number one, actual cuts were less than half the planned figure—is offset with higher procurement prices for agricultural produce. Corporate taxes are raised. Word goes out to get more excise and customs revenue. Non-resident Indians are arbitrarily co-opted to cooperate in the Save thy Motherland campaign. And although it isn't mentioned outright, word goes out that the IMF, World Bank and the developed nations are a combined gravy train. A subtle change from the earlier "The West is making us change, so trash them," to a cleverer stand: "We need to change or the West won't help, so let's not dismiss them."

And talking—incessantly—about what needs to be done. The public sector must shape up, we have no money to pump into inefficient units, workers will be cushioned to absorb lay-offs, bureaucratic control needs to be reduced,

and so on. Just talk, because this is the really difficult part, that goes beyond squeezing the private sector and the middle classes and into the realm of squeezing institutions that India, and finance ministers down the line, have cosseted, protected and depended on for their existence. Crack it, and the heat may get unbearable. And getting a handle on inflation, deficit and government spending depends on the outcome of how he handles the situation.

The finance minister knows it. His previous

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jobs included running the RBI, the Planning Commission, and advising the Government on economic policy. And teaching economics at places as diverse as Punjab University, the Delhi School of Economics and Cambridge University. But that was all a long time ago, and light years away from his present set of problems. Playing economics versus politics is Singh's newest assignment. "As of now," he says, "I feel things will be under control." Whose control, was the question screaming to be asked as the year closed. The finance minister's, or those who like to throw the switch on the seat he occupies?

—SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI

THE BUDGET

IT was arguably the most eagerly awaited budget in the country's history, with a promise of pain and progress in equal measure. What perhaps added to the anticipation was that the budget was delayed by four months. And the man in the hot seat, Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, lived up to it.

FREE INDUSTRY A BIT, BUT TAX IT TO THE LIMIT.

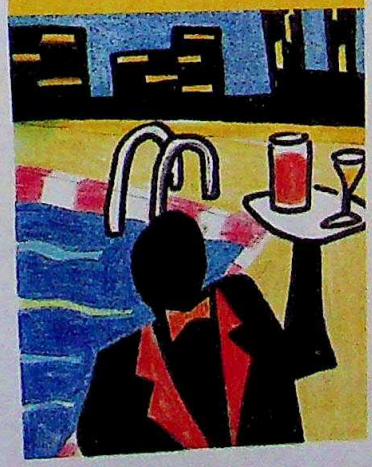
It came in two stages: on July 24 morning, the unveiling of an industrial policy which seeks growth, and later in the day, a budget which was a masterpiece of political handling. "A finance minister has to be hard-headed. This I shall endeavour to be," said Singh, during the speech. "I shall be firm when it comes to defending the interests of this nation. But I promise that in dealing with the people of India, I shall be soft-hearted." Magnificent, because it juggled economic and political expediency just right.

He taxed the Rajiv-era life-stylers by hiking rates for petrol, cars, TVs, refrigerators and VCRs. He hiked corporate tax rates and reduced depreciation benefits. There was no scope for corporate and middle class outrage—the sops offered in the industrial policy—delicensing and deregulation of industry, including the consumer durable sector—promised good times ahead for both. After over 40 years in the policy boondocks, even the small measure of hope the policy brought received good play. "I only wish," says Harsh Goenka, managing director of Ceat Limited, a little wistfully, "this had been announced a decade ago." Besides, the public sector came in for special mention in the day, with statements of how inefficiency won't be tolerated, and how sick public sector units must die in order to strengthen those still in the black.

REDUCE INEFFICIENCY AND LOSSES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR.

As for the politicians, both from the Congress and outside, it took fancier footwork. First, all parties were consulted, and assured that the agriculture sector and the poor—the perennial vote banks—would remain unscathed, as most of the additional revenue was being tapped from the better off. As for possible reaction of the industrial policy, such as shutting down unprofitable units and laying off workers, Singh paved the way by saying he wouldn't move a muscle without first setting up some kind of social security net.

TAXING THE RAJIV-ERA LIFE-STYLERS



But the best bit of jugglery came with balancing the budget. With 1991-92 estimates, Singh's expenditure actually rose by Rs 5,600 crore from the previous year's levels. And he planned to

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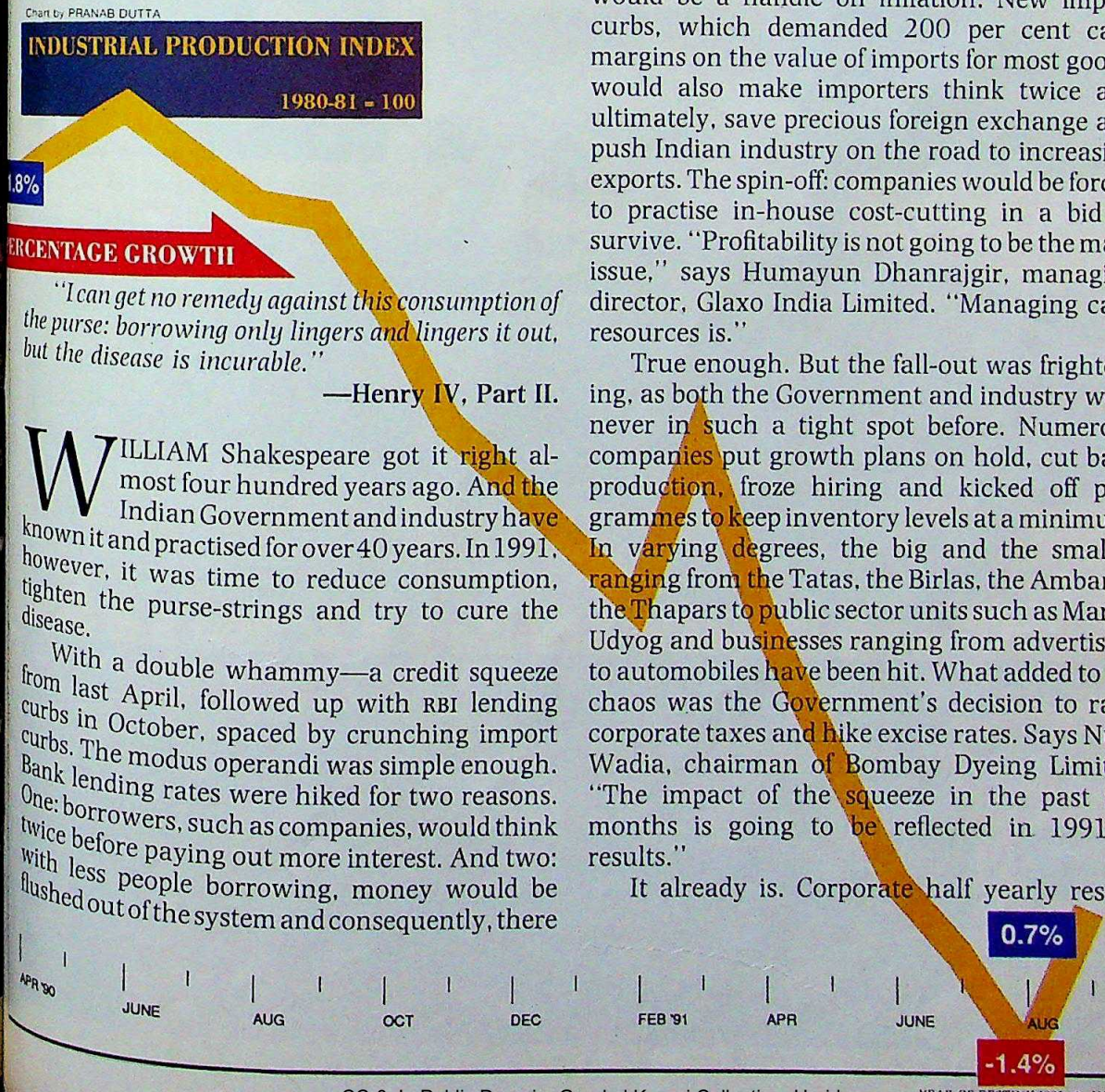
pull it off by raising a mere Rs 2,005 crore in additional taxes. On paper, it was simple: with the rupee devaluation, the Government's take on customs revenue went up as higher costs if imports translate into higher customs duties. So, although the budget gave away over Rs 500 crore in import duty reliefs, customs revenue was expected to rise by Rs 5,100 crore. The rest of the gap was to be bridged simply. Rs 2,500 crore from the sale of public sector equity chunks, Rs 1,900 crore through cuts in export and fertiliser subsidies and other, sundry cuts. And, most importantly, keep the budget deficit down to 6.5 per cent of the GDP.

Super—no magic wand, no fudging, just straightforward arithmetic. Only, it was all on paper. Customs revenue is expected to fall, as the import curbs took the life out of them. The public sector shares haven't yet been sold off, and even if they are, government-run mutual funds will pick them up, so the money stays with the state. And fertiliser subsidy cuts were propped by an increase in crop procurement prices. So, stalemate. And a good chance of paper promises going bust.

The Government is desperate for money, and desperate for time. Paper tricks won't work any longer. The budget for 1992-93 may be the least eagerly awaited in the country's history.

THE CRUNCH

Chart by PRANAB DUTTA



"I can get no remedy against this consumption of the purse: borrowing only lingers and lingers it out, but the disease is incurable."

—Henry IV, Part II.

WILLIAM Shakespeare got it right almost four hundred years ago. And the Indian Government and industry have known it and practised for over 40 years. In 1991, however, it was time to reduce consumption, tighten the purse-strings and try to cure the disease.

With a double whammy—a credit squeeze from last April, followed up with RBI lending curbs in October, spaced by crunching import curbs. The modus operandi was simple enough. Bank lending rates were hiked for two reasons. One: borrowers, such as companies, would think twice before paying out more interest. And two: with less people borrowing, money would be flushed out of the system and consequently, there would be a handle on inflation. New import curbs, which demanded 200 per cent cash margins on the value of imports for most goods, would also make importers think twice and ultimately, save precious foreign exchange and push Indian industry on the road to increasing exports. The spin-off: companies would be forced to practise in-house cost-cutting in a bid to survive. "Profitability is not going to be the main issue," says Humayun Dhanrajgir, managing director, Glaxo India Limited. "Managing cash resources is."

True enough. But the fall-out was frightening, as both the Government and industry were never in such a tight spot before. Numerous companies put growth plans on hold, cut back production, froze hiring and kicked off programmes to keep inventory levels at a minimum. In varying degrees, the big and the small—ranging from the Tatas, the Birlas, the Ambanis, the Thapars to public sector units such as Maruti Udyog and businesses ranging from advertising to automobiles have been hit. What added to the chaos was the Government's decision to raise corporate taxes and hike excise rates. Says Nusli Wadia, chairman of Bombay Dyeing Limited: "The impact of the squeeze in the past few months is going to be reflected in 1991-92 results."

It already is. Corporate half yearly results

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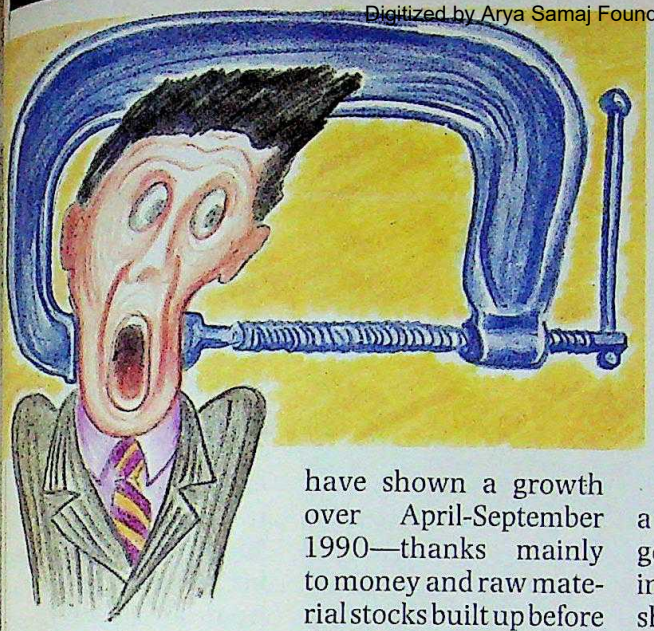

have shown a growth over April-September 1990—thanks mainly to money and raw material stocks built up before the squeeze was put on. But the full year's results are expected to be way below 1990-91 levels, when sales for the top 700 companies were up 18 per cent over the previous year, gross profit climbed by 23.5 per cent and net profit by an impressive 35.9.

The Government hasn't benefited much either. Foreign exchange reserves have increased, but customs collections have dropped, with people importing less. This has also affected industry, as needed capital goods are too expensive to import. With a slowdown in industry, the Government is facing an excise revenue shortfall. Money supply is getting out of hand as many people are using up what they have and a lot of what they haven't declared to keep themselves going. And inflation is a touchy subject right now. The National Council of Applied Economic Research estimates that the curbs alone will add 0.5 per cent to the inflation rate—industry has been forced to hike consumer-end prices with capital and production costs increasing.

Towards the end of the year, the Government pulled back its import curbs—boosted by a healthier foreign exchange stash and fear of industry spinning out of control—slashing cash margins for a range of goods. But there is a feeling within the industry that if the situation gets bad, the curbs will come back. Besides, an increase in interest rates is on the cards, which should see some more fireworks.

The thing is, apart from cutting government expenditure—which is unlikely to be substantial anyway—nobody has a better idea of how to fix the mess. "We have to go through hell to reach purgatory," asserts Freddie Mehta, economist and a director on the board of Tata Sons, "and go through purgatory to eventually reach paradise." It could be a frighteningly long journey. —SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI

THE FOREIGN HAND

THE hand that was kept at bay is the hand that now saveth your skin, verily.

This bit of paraphrasing doesn't dull realism, it merely underscores it. And India found out the hard way in 1991 how real the situation was. A significant part of the lesson: don't knock the foreign hand. For the sake of convenience, let's just call it The Hand. Also, let's take a look at what The Hand has taught us in 1991.

ONE: The IMF, though overbearing, isn't a killer. It saved India with a $1.8-billion loan when the Gulf war broke out last January and in December, chipped in with a similar amount. Among other things, the money helped pay for oil imports, interest payment on debt, and repayment of some debt. It also helped push through an economic reform package—although mostly talk—which India needs. "If you've got yourself in a position to ask for a loan, to go and beg for it," says Darbari Seth, chairman of Tata Chemicals Limited and

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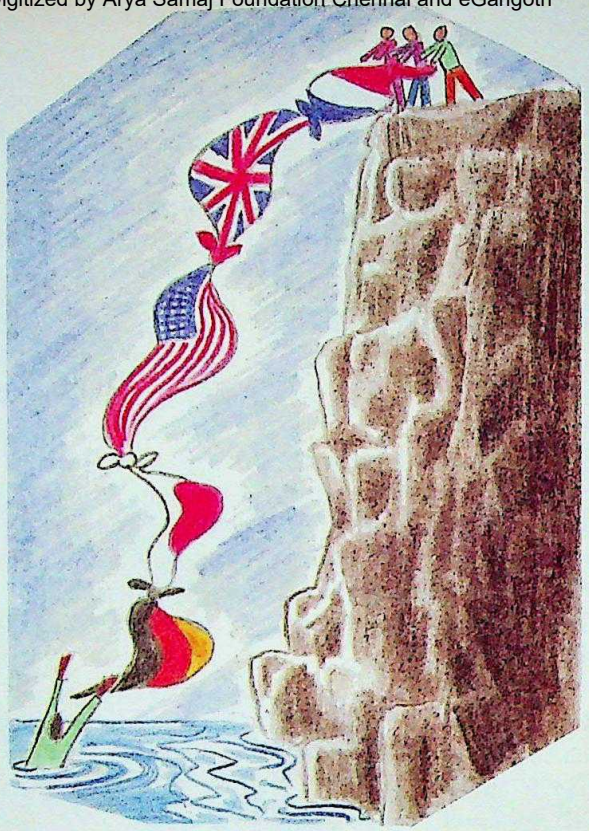
Illustrations by PRANAB DUTTA

Tata Tea Limited, among other companies, "then you have to accept the conditionalities that go with the loan." Quite.

TWO: The World Bank isn't overbearing. In fact, it shells out money for many projects which nobody else will touch—a lot of money at dirt cheap rates of interest with as much as 20 years to pay back in some cases. The bank has funded major Indian irrigation, power, literacy, telecommunications and health projects, to name a few areas. It also has close to $13 billion in undisbursed Indian loans, not because they don't want to give it, but because



India can't take it: no money at home to fund the portion of projects that India must pay for. We blew it in 1991. To prevent a repeat, the finance minister is trying practically everything in the book to ensure public projects can rake in the required money.

THREE: Industrialised nations love money clout, because they know it's what makes them tick, and countries such as India love it too, because they know what it can do for them. So, the US is welcome to invest here, as is the UK, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Singapore, Australia and practically every nation that has the moolah to spare. In the hope that

IN THE STILLNESS OF THE MORNING EVERYTHING WAITS

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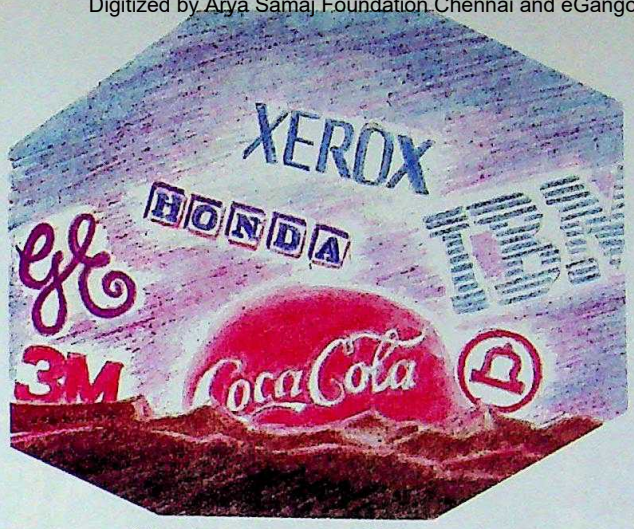

oreign investment levels in India go up from the measly $200 million a year-mark to at least 10 times that in a couple of years. While that is way below the Asian Tiger average of about $3 billion, it's a saving grace. Lesson learnt, and politicians and babus, who earlier went abroad for junkets, have now at least added the search for money to their list.

FOUR: A multinational company, like any other company, is totally overbearing but it is also hungry for more profits, like any other company. Besides, while countries can help out with loans which one has to pay back, multinational companies help out with investible funds—which mostly stay here—technology, exports and international links. "Today," say S.M. Datta, chairman of Hindustan Lever Limiter, "there's a great deal of appreciation of what a multinational can do for the economy." So, an easing of investment norms allow them to increase equity participation from 40 per cent of a company to 51, and even, think of letting them retain brand names without an Indian flavour. Therefore, there's a good chance that a Hero Honda motorcycle will become plain Honda, Lehar Pepsi switches back to Pepsi and IBM gets to sell its computers minus the Tata tag. Some more: no easing off at home means pressure to keep Indian goods out of export markets and, more importantly, pressure to lessen aid and loan flows to India—industry and government work hand in glove elsewhere too.

That's what The Hand is all about. Love it or live with it. And realise that without The Hand, thou art at a loss, completely.

—SUDEEP CHAKRAVARTI

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COLLAPSE

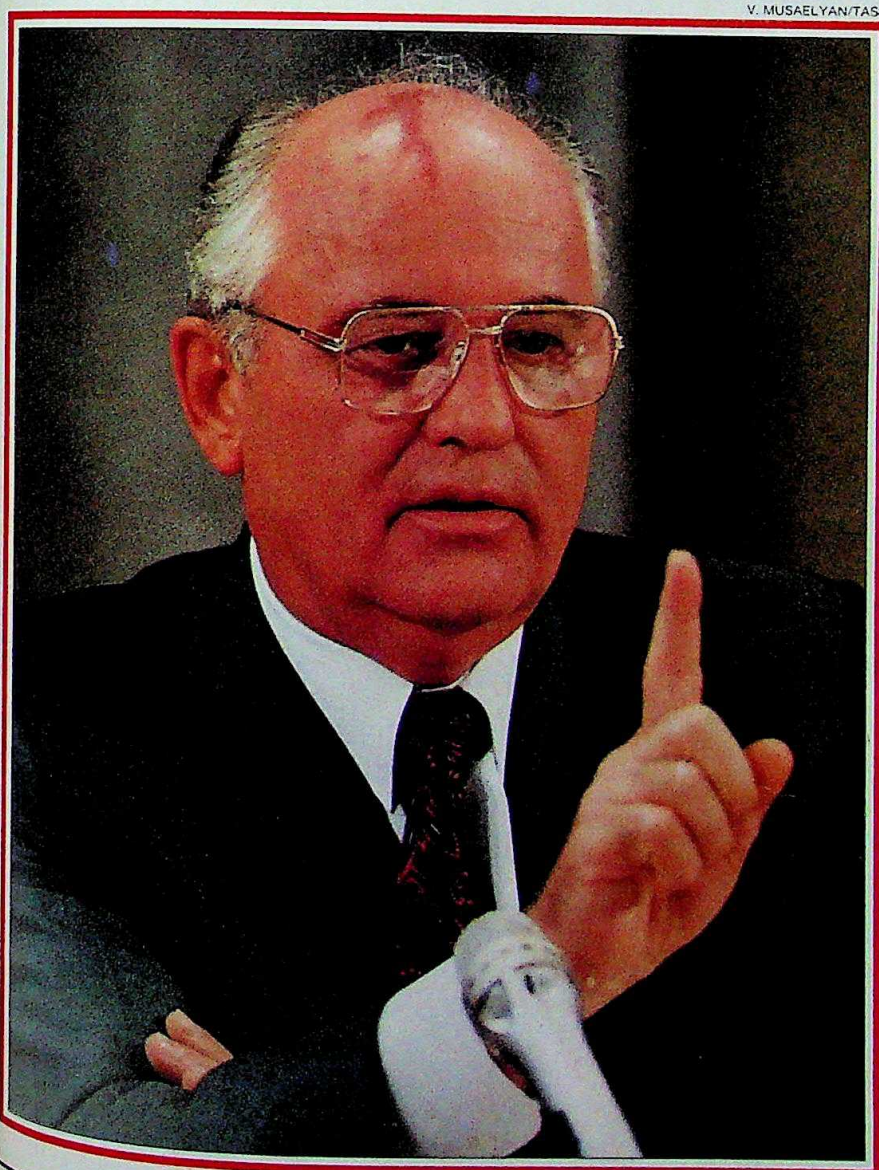
A LEADER HUMBLED AND THE END OF THE SOVIET UNION

"WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO CUT THIS COUNTRY INTO PIECES? WE ARE MAKING A MISTAKE."

—MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

YESTERDAY, a visionary who changed the world and terminated the Cold War. Today, a leader without a country. Yesterday, the most powerful empire since the creation of history. Today, a crumbling confusion of squabbling republics. It was five years in the making. It seems like five days.

V. MUSAELYAN/TASS



Television snatched away history's depth and inner momentum and left us with a blur of images, some sharp, some sorrowful, a majority obscure and forgettable. The avalanche of events that overtook the Soviet Union in 1991 were the most epochal of the 20th century. Only the two World Wars have impacted with equal force. Revolutions, they say, devour their children. The Second Russian Revolution devoured a once-mighty empire and with it, perhaps, the man who set it all in motion. For five years, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev straddled the world stage like a giant. In the sixth, he stumbled. And fell. And was forgotten.

It may have been the stunning speed with which the Soviet Union collapsed. Or the failures of the perestroika programme made poignantly dramatic with the empty shop shelves and the angry crowds surging through the streets of Moscow. Or, perhaps the flamboyant arrival of a new leader. As rapid as Gorbachev's fall was Boris Yeltsin's rise, a tragic tandem that would, in the throes of its destructive symbiosis, oversee the break-up of an empire.

Seen in retrospect,

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"I MUST TELL THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE THAT THEIR LIVES WILL NOT IMPROVE BEFORE THE END OF 1992."

—BORIS YELTSIN

Gorbachev's fate was sealed well before April 1991, when Yeltsin and leaders of eight other republics pressurised him to initiate steps to restructure the Soviet Union. Severe food shortages, economic anarchy and his own political vacillation had severely damaged the two most vital toe holds to survival: credibility and a mandate for change. Unable to transform his pledges into reality and reduced to a hollow political shell, Gorbachev agreed to a fragile compromise, giving in to the demands of the republics for more autonomy.

A historic event speeded up his political demise. In June, the first free Presidential election in Russia's 1,000-year history saw Yeltsin triumph. As head of the largest, most powerful and richest entity in the Soviet Union, it gave him the leverage he needed in his obsession to oust Gorbachev.

A tragi-comic coup in August by a handful of communist hard-liners did the rest. Gorbachev should have returned from his 72-hour imprisonment a hero. In the event, it was Yeltsin who upstaged him, leading the people's army that caused the coup to collapse.

The immediate aftermath of the coup gave Gorbachev the opportunity to seize the moment. He let it pass. Instead of denouncing the Communist Party for covert support of the coup, he withdrew into the Kremlin while Yeltsin took command.

By the time Gorbachev emerged to announce his resignation as general secretary of the Communist Party, the damage was done. "He

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should have done this a year ago and redeemed himself. But now it is too late," said one-time ally and former foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, echoing the sentiments of most Soviet citizens. Gorbachev desperately tried to cling on. "I'll use all my political and legal authority to continue to play a major role," he declared, not realising that it was political and legal authority which he now lacked the most.

Between the August coup and the December decree which confirmed what was already fact—the break-up of the Soviet Union—the country went, in the words of Boris Yeltsin, "through some sick eternity". In fact, the official collapse of communism in the wake of the failed coup only speeded up the official collapse of the Soviet Empire. On December 21, after a series of meetings, presidents of eleven former Soviet Republics formally created the Commonwealth of Independent States. "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality, is ceasing its existence." Gorbachev, as President of the Soviet Union, was left without a country to govern. Four days later, he resigned.

Gorbachev's ignominious departure from the world stage was obscured further by the fears for the future. The nuclear arsenal now divided among the newly-independent republics, the battle for control of the former empire's fearsome military might, ethnic tensions and the struggle to find a non-Russian identity, all churning together in an ideological melting pot. And, of more concern to India, the threat of a resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism among the newly-independent Central Asian republics. An empire is dead. What emerges from its ashes could dictate the future course of history. ◆

HOW THE FRACTIOUS REPUBLICS EMERGE FROM THEIR BAPTISM OF FIRE WILL SHAPE THE COURSE OF FUTURE HISTORY.

Map by B.K. SHARMA

SOVIET UNION: THE BREAK-UP

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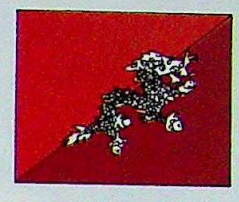
DRAGON AWAKE

BHUTAN'S ANTI-MONARCHY STIR MAKES WORLD HEADLINES

"WE ARE NOT READY FOR DEMOCRACY YET. IT WILL CAUSE MAYHEM."

—OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN OF ROYAL BHUTAN GOVERNMENT

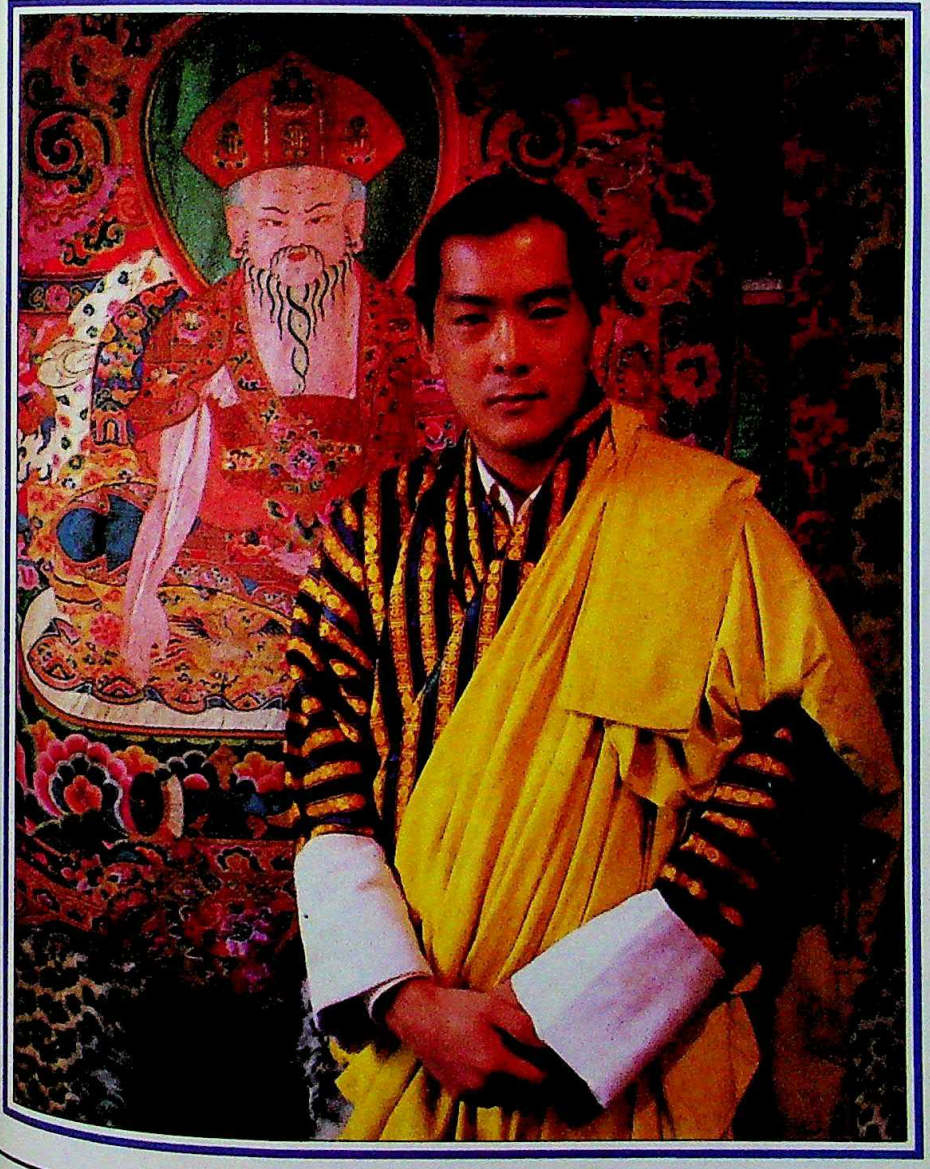


THE dragon awoke. Bhutan's isolation finally ended in 1991. The symbol of that rude awakening was its young king, Jigme Singye Wangchuk. A monarch who likes to maintain the lowest of profiles, Wangchuk made reluctant headlines by the last-minute cancellation of his visit to Colombo for the SAARC summit in early December. It was, in effect, the first admission to the outside world that his Shangri-la was under seige.

Kept under wraps for three years, the anti-monarchy agitation had snowballed unobtrusively. Now it was out in the open as was the threat to Bhutan and its King. Led by settlers of Nepali origin, the xenophobia rapidly intensified in direct proportion to the Government's attempts at repression. Just how much of a threat the movement had grown into had been underlined by the King himself. In October, he startled the National Assembly by announcing that he would abdicate if he was unable to solve the problem in two years. But that could prove a dangerous pledge.

The violence has triggered a massive exodus; about 8,000 Bhutanese of Nepali origin have fled the country and flooded refugee camps. With human rights organisations getting into the act, Bhutan's isolation is now a thing of the past. For King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, the noose is clearly tightening. ◆

SAIBAL DAS



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ROULETTE

FLUCTUATING FORTUNES IN THE EMERALD ISLE

"IF ANYONE HAS SUFFERED PAIN IN THE FOOT BECAUSE OF KICKING ME, I AM NOT TO BLAME."

—PRESIDENT PREMADASA

LIKE the rubber it produces, Sri Lanka has a way of bouncing back from the brink. That element of resilience extends to its leadership as well. By mid-'91, the country's economy was in dire straits and ethnic conflict threatened to tear the country apart. On March 2, the hardliner most closely identified with the Government's offensive against the LTTE, defence minister Ranjan Wijeratne was blown to bits by a remote-controlled bomb in the heart of Colombo. As the most heavily-guarded man in the country, his murder underlined the LTTE's resolve to bring the Government to its knees.

SHYAM TEKWANI

Three months later, the Tigers struck again, sending out an even more forceful signal of intent. The target: the top-security headquarters of the Joint Operations Command in Colombo, the nerve-centre of the massive machinery set up solely to combat the LTTE. The Kamikaze-type mission, an LTTE trademark, left 40 dead.

That devastating attack also proved a set-back to President Premadasa's two-pronged strategy of putting the Tigers under military pressure and forcing them to sue for peace from a vulnerable position. The 60,000-strong Sri Lankan Army had, by mid-year, scored stunning successes against the LTTE under an offensive aimed at cutting off main supply routes.

Back in Colombo, it was panic stations as key members of Premadasa's Cabinet conspired with the Opposition in a bid to impeach the President in September, charging him with corruption. But Premadasa, living up to his reputation as a slippery customer, outmaneouvered his opponents, sacked the erring ministers and emerged stronger than before. Helping his recovery was a parallel recovery in the economy, energised by some major liberalisation moves. Sri Lanka—like Premadasa—is back in business. ◆

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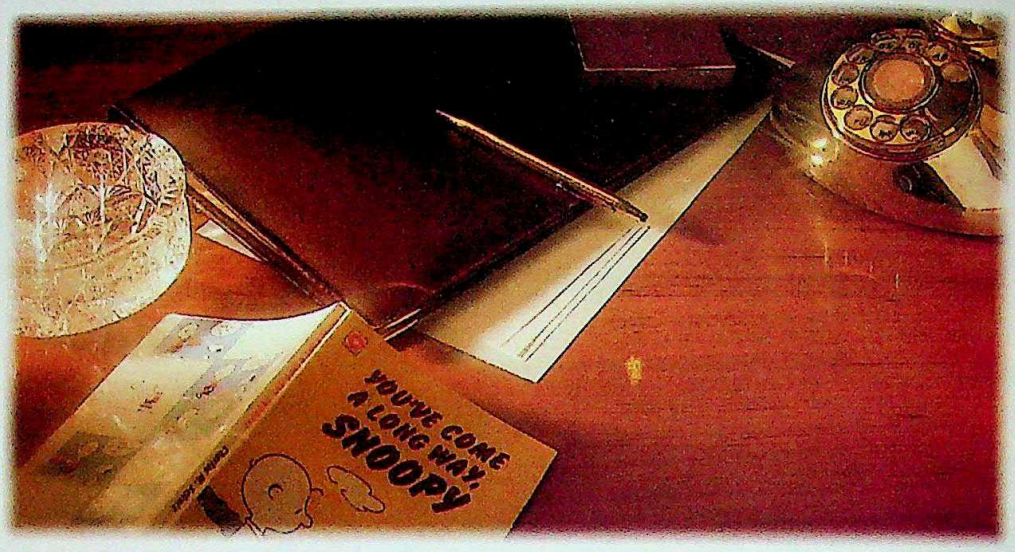
SIGNS OF GREAT MINDS AT WORK.



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FREE AT LAST

DEMOCRACY IN NEPAL BUT FEARS FOR THE FUTURE

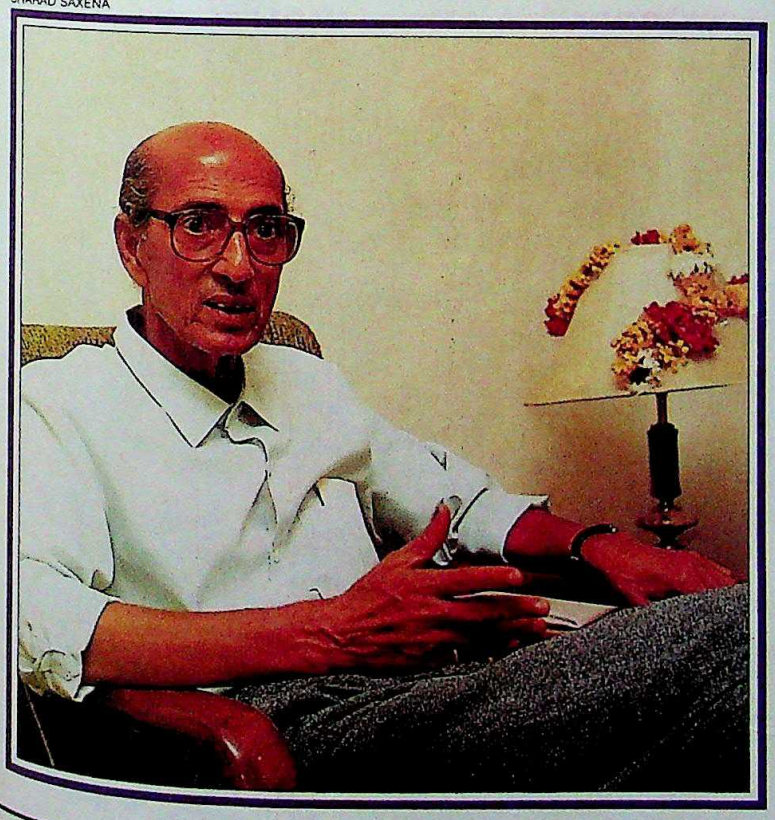
NEPAL had a dramatic date with destiny in 1991. In May, the first free elections in 32 years marked the end of monarchy and the historic debut of democracy. After years of political suppression and autocratic rule, the winds of freedom were finally gusting through the tiny Himalayan country. But that was, equally, a prelude to chaos. The sudden advent of political freedom in the kingdom, characteristically, set the stage for a bitter, aggressive and bloody election campaign.

With an incredible 40 political parties in the fray spanning the ideological spectrum, Nepal was clearly heading for a traumatic transition. More crucial, the threat of widespread, election-related anarchy would have played right into the hands of the powerful presence waiting in the wings. King Birendra had given in to the growing demands for democracy—a student-led agitation that snowballed into a massive movement—with obvious reluctance some months earlier. But a breakdown of law and order would offer him, and the aggrieved army, a convenient handle to step back into the picture and bury democracy, perhaps forever.

"WE HAVE TO REBUILD NEPAL FROM SCRATCH. THE FEAR IS THERE THAT DEMOCRACY CAN DEGENERATE INTO DISORDER."

—G.P. KOIRALA, PRIME MINISTER

SHARAD SAXENA



In the event, the violence was contained, but only just. Nepal had its first democratically-elected government in almost three decades, but also, only just. The Nepali Congress scraped home with a fragile majority while the communists, in a remarkable showing, gained 69 seats in the 205-member House of Representatives. Free elections may have been a new phenomenon in Nepal but its new prime minister wasn't. Girija Prasad Koirala, an old warhorse, had just one major asset: his experience.

He would need much more than that to tackle the daunting problems facing the nation and its new government: an inefficient administration, a battered economy and a spiralling price rise. Binod Budathoki, a Kathmandu taxi driver, echoed widespread sentiments when he asked: "What is the use of freedom if we cannot afford food?" Six months later, it is a question that is still being asked, but with less vehemence and frequency. Freedom, clearly, has found root. ◆

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Ghazals

Iqbal Bano
Ghazals/Thumri/Dadra

Reshma
Folk and Sufi songs

Tahira Syed
Ghazals /Geet/
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B 91034

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IQBAL BANO

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• Aaya na raas nala-e-dil • Muddat hui hai • Na kisi ke aankh ka noor hoon • Dekhna bhi to unhe • Na rawaan kahiye • Mere qaboo mein na pehron

B 91036

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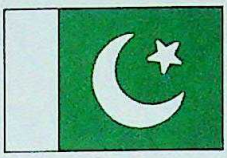
—NAWAZ SHARIF

IN Pakistan, it's been business as usual. In January, Benazir Bhutto was in public disgrace, her party in a shambles, her husband jailed on a slew of corruption charges and the man who replaced her, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif riding high on a radical economic reform platform.



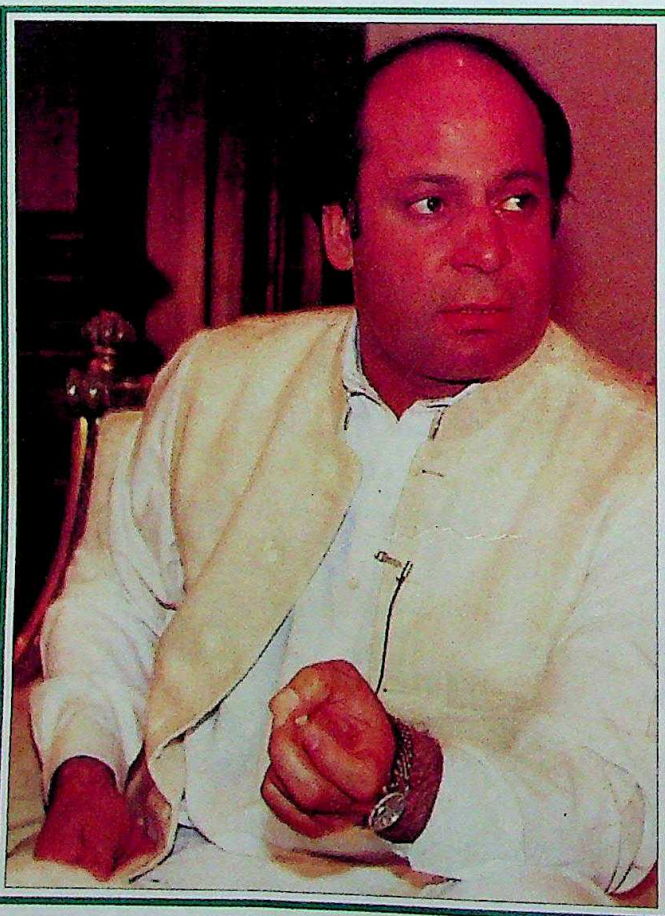
But subcontinental politics is like one-day cricket, unpredictable and fast-paced. By year-end, it was Nawaz Sharif who was in political quicksand, embroiled in financial scandals while Benazir straddled the comeback trail with increasing confidence, wearing, once again, the look of a winner.

Much of that dramatic turnabout is through no effort on her part. The Government's crackdown on her Pakistan People's Party (PPP), including an attack on Benazir's car last August, is now seen as political vendetta. A parallel crackdown in Sind launched by Sharif's political ally, Chief Minister Jam Sadiq Ali, offered clearer confirmation; hundreds of PPP workers have been jailed for being 'terrorists'.

As an obvious result, the 18

Sharif and Khan: losing ground

SHARAD SAXENA



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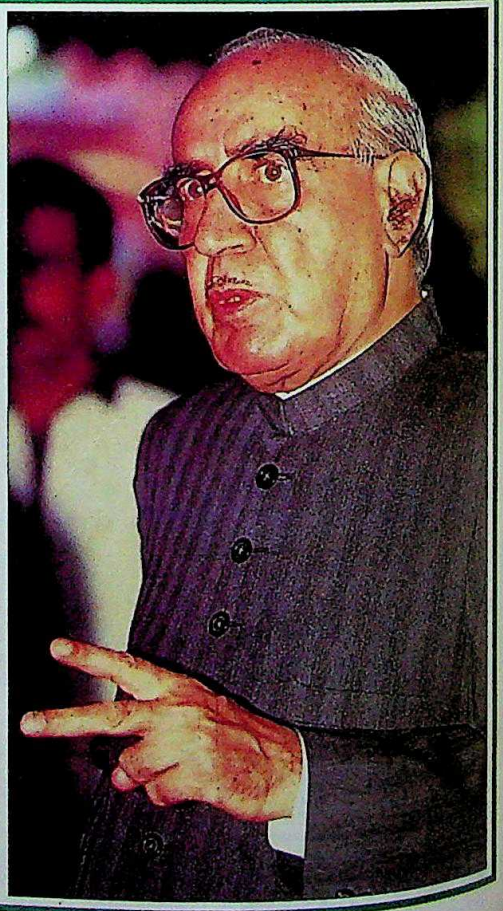

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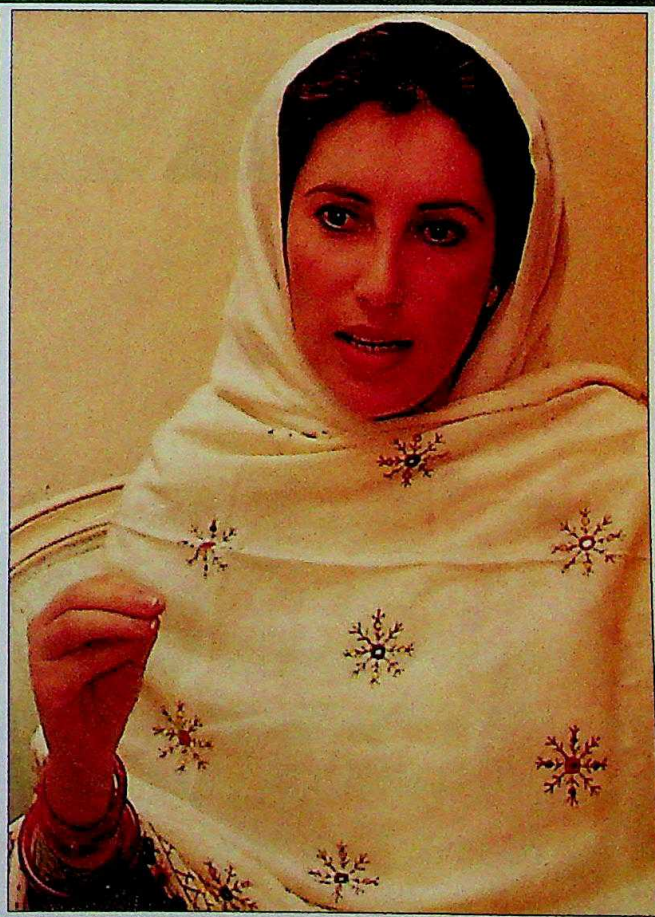
criminal and civil charges against Benazir and her husband have lost much of their legitimacy, even more so considering that not one conviction has been achieved so far. The Government's political strategy, of keeping Benazir pinned down by legal crossfire, has clearly backfired. Another grievous mistake has been the blatant intimidation of the media, further eroding Sharif's liberal image. Benazir's charge that "you have a fraudulent assembly, a mauled judiciary and a media that is intimidated," was starting to carry a ring of conviction.

Even more fortuitous for Benazir has been the gradual eclipse of the once all-powerful President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the man instrumental in dismissing her government in August 1990 for corruption and incompetence. The lack of conviction in any of the cases is a personal embarrassment for Khan who has faced other setbacks as well.

The President's stubborn support for Pakistan's nuclear programme has alienated the Americans at a time when Islamabad's defence establishment, including the pro-West army chief General Janjua, is desperate for a resumption of US military aid. More damaging has been the political fall-out from the December outrage in Karachi, a violent sexual assault on one of Benazir's friends who accused Irfanullah Marwat, the President's son-in-law, of instigating it. The PPP jeered at the President during his address to the Assembly on December 19, unthinkable a few months ago. Political equations in Pakistan have clearly changed dramatically in the last 12 months. And, it is now Benazir who is laughing all the way to the vote bank. ◆

"THE SHARIF GOVERNMENT HAS CROSSED LIMITS EVEN GENERAL ZIA DIDN'T. ALL THEY ARE OBSESSED WITH IS TO DRIVE ME OUT OF THE COUNTRY."

—BENAZIR BHUTTO



Janjua and Benazir: upper hand

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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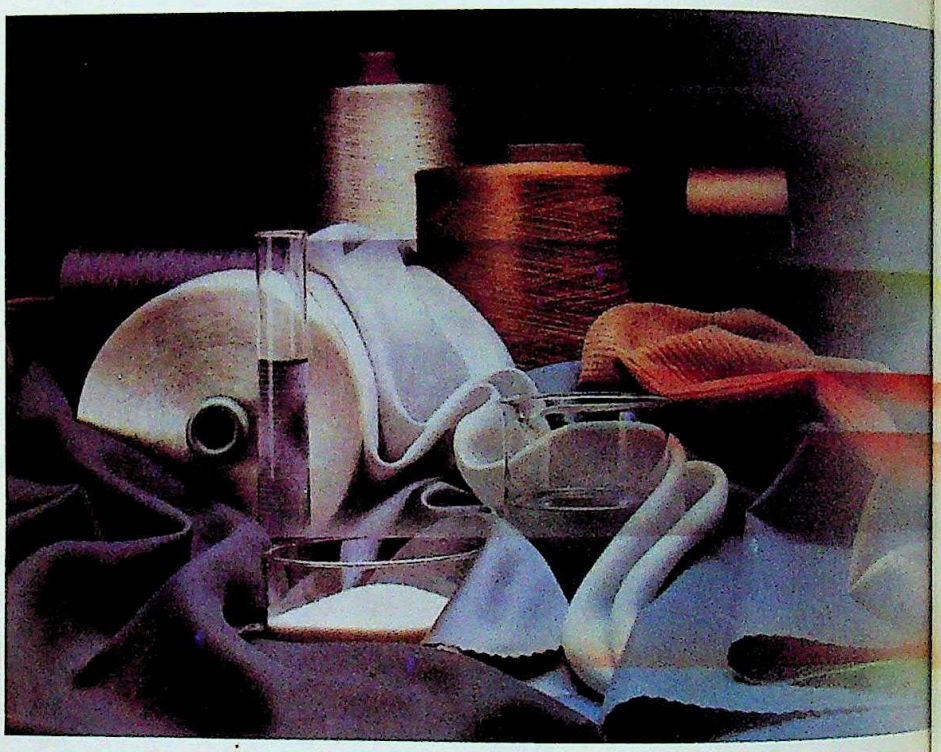
FOUR MONTHS FROM NOW, WHEN N BRI

GUESS WHO'LL SUPPLY SOME OF THE FINEST Y ?



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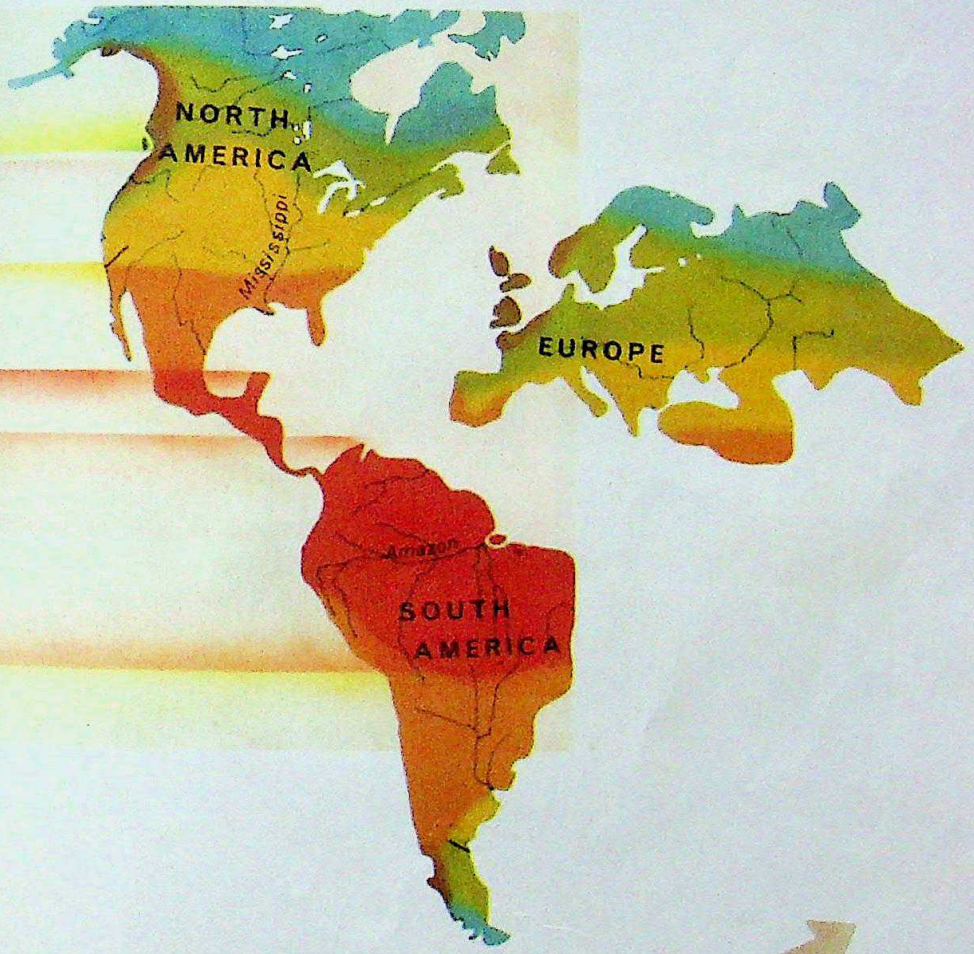
EN NEBRICS TAKE SHAPE IN EUROPE,

EST Y, ?



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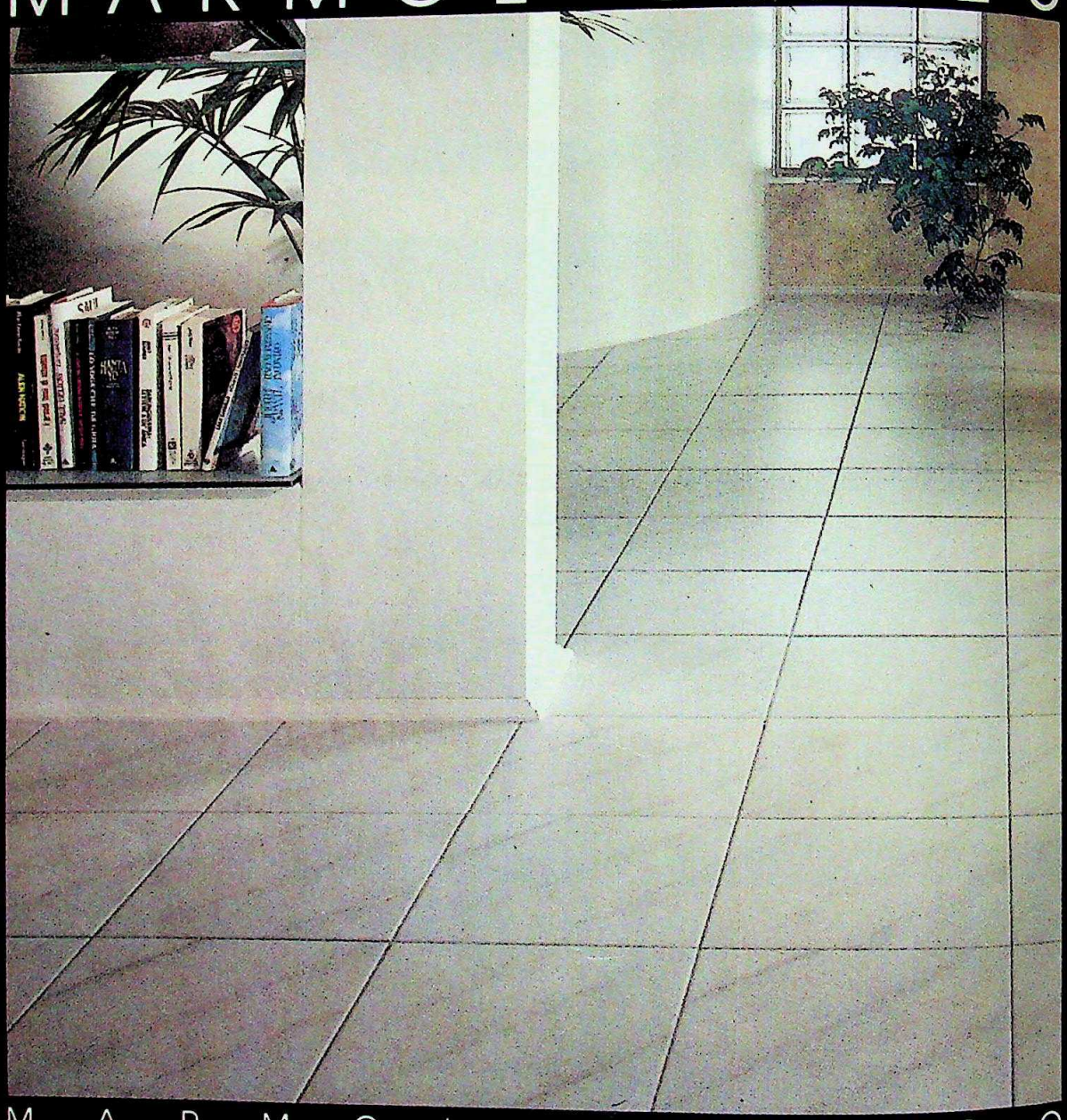

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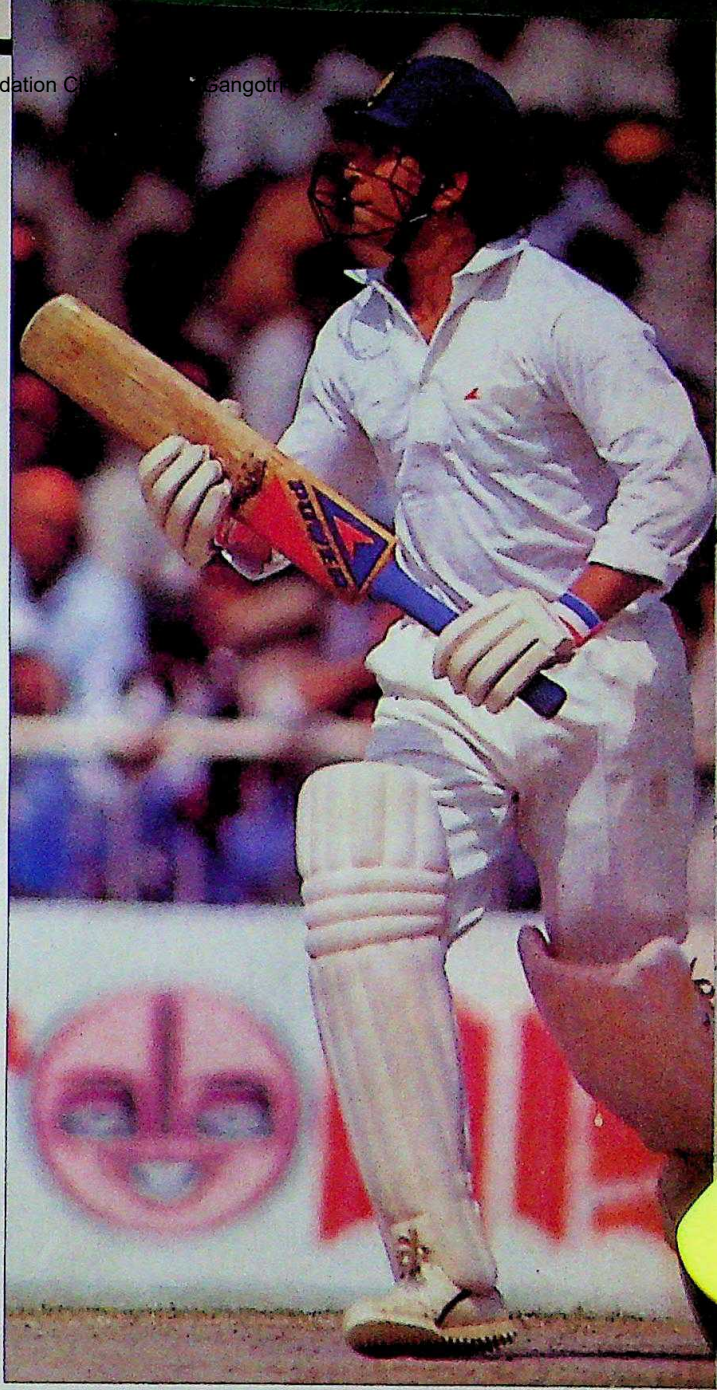
ON THE BACK FOOT

BARELY four days into 1991, and we were already riding an unnatural high. India's cricket captain Mohammed Azharuddin was proudly hoisting the glittering Asia Cup in Eden Gardens as if he had just been gifted the Holy Grail. As an ironic salute to the vicissitudes of Indian sport, there could have been none so fitting. India had just beaten lowly Sri Lanka in a one-sided tourney but the atmosphere was reminiscent of Lords after a World Cup win.

And well it might. Indian victories in the sporting arena were becoming as rare as honest politicians and any win was a windfall. Sharjah put the skids on overblown optimism and Hobart and Brisbane signposted the ignominious slide. That sorry story was to dog the hesitant footfalls of sport throughout 1991 as the country reclaimed its status of perennial also-rans.

Wunderkinds like Sachin Tendulkar, Viswanathan Anand and Leander Paes appeared like bits of flotsam bobbing along on an inconsistent sea of mediocrity. Viewed against the backdrop of a beggardly year, Indian sport seemed perennially trapped in a psychological mindblock, prone to pressure and unfulfilled promise.

Cricket provided the obvious example with 1991 being billed as the Golden Year of Indian cricket. The hype, at the start of a scorching season, seemed somewhat justified. For once, the selectors were graced with an embarrassment of riches. And a timely rarity: the simultaneous rise of two supremely talented midddle-order batsmen, Sachin Tendulkar and Sanjay Manjrekar. The



BHAWAN SINGH

Tendulkar, prone to pressure, as were the rest

BAT & BAWL

THE BATTING CRUMBLED, THE BOWLERS PREVENTED TOTAL IGNOMINY, A TEENAGER EMERGED AS THE ONLY FUTURE HOPE. FOR THE REST, IT WAS A CASE OF BATTING AND BAWLING.

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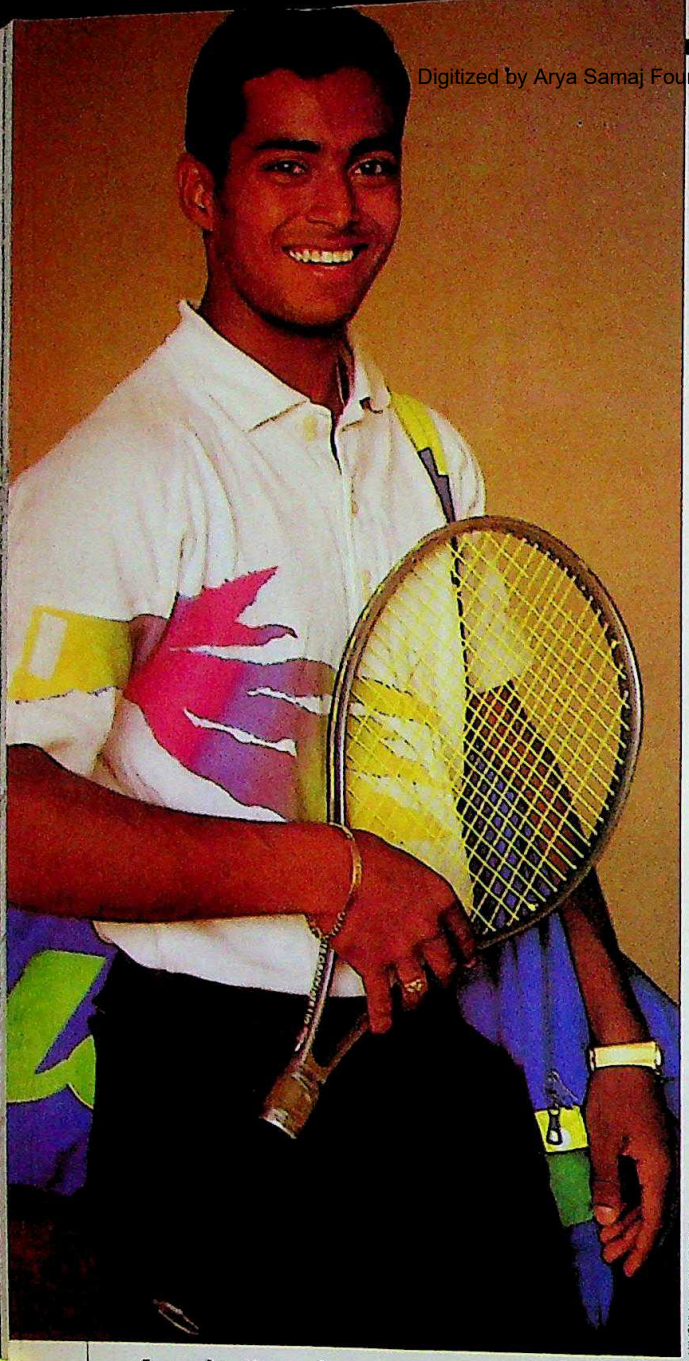

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Leander Paes showed that dedication pays

A LONE RANGER

KRISHNAN CRASHED OUT OF CONTENTION, THE AMRITRAJS WERE COURTING CORPORATE FAME AND THAT ONLY LEFT LEANDER TO PLOUGH A LONELY FURROW.

comment by Javed Burke, chairman of Pakistan's selection committee, that "Your batsmen are simply superb," seemed to find echoes in cricketing circles everywhere as the team geared up for its first major challenge of the year, the annual desert carnival at Sharjah.

Then came the mirage. Three wins in a row against powerful Pakistan and a new-look West Indian team bore the stamp of class and authority. For a while, it appeared that India's cricketing gods had finally succumbed to a fit of generosity. As things turned out, it was nothing more than a divine reminder that, in the sporting arena, mortality wears a long rope.

AND, an even longer face. Sharjah's symptoms were easily diagnosed; the terminal Indian disease of cracking under psychological pressure. For the best line-up in the world, it was a case of bat and bawl.

The sob story continued as an eagerly-awaited tour by Pakistan was buried under the pitch at Brabourne Stadium. Ostensibly, it may have been the bigotry of Bal Thackeray that caused the damage. But subcontinental cricketing rivalry had started to acquire dangerous diplomatic overtones as well. In that sense, the hastily-arranged replacement tour by South Africa, making their international debut after decades of isolation, only proved the point. Though India outplayed the opposition, it turned out to be more of a diplomatic coup than a serious cricketing contest.

It was, ultimately, the spirit of Sharjah that required exorcism. And the result was a predictable knee-jerk reaction from the selection squad—the recall of two former stars who had been dumped because their performance was considered, by the very same selectors, to be below par. The resurrection of Srikkanth and Vengsarkar proved predictably illusory and failure followed the team around Australia like a persistent pest.

So what else was new? The Mother Hubbard of Indian sport didn't have to open her cupboard to know how bare it would be. It was deja vu time all over again. Indian sport was performing its favourite tango: one hesitant step forward and two hasty steps back. On the tennis courts, Leander Paes punched the air in victorious intoxication as he led India to a creditable win over South Korea in a Davis Cup play-off. But his song of success, including the US Open junior title in September, was destined to be a solo. Ramesh Krishnan

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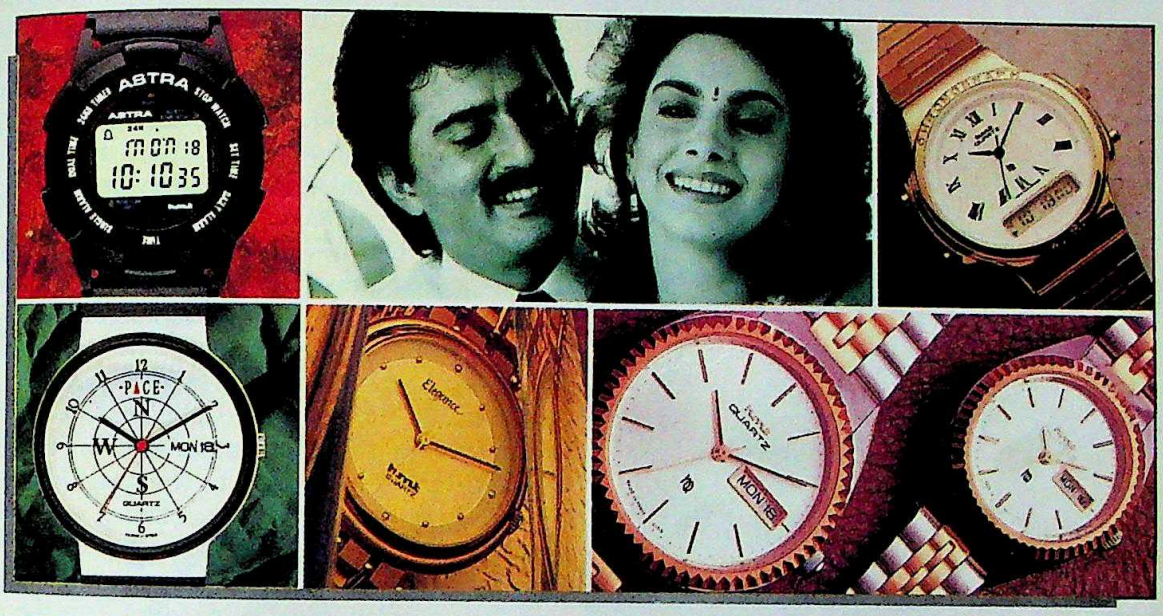
TEN YEARS OF QUARTZ

TEN YEARS AGO, HMT PRODUCED INDIA'S FIRST QUARTZ WATCH WITH THE FINEST INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT.



TODAY, TEN YEARS LATER, ITS QUARTZ RANGE IS A MOVEMENT BY ITSELF.

1981. It was a time when quartz technology took the world by storm. At the core of this technology lies a part called a movement. That is what ensures accuracy. Leading watch makers the world over have relied on the Citizen movement. Undeniably, it is technology of today. But HMT collaborated with Citizen and began manufacturing it ten years ago.

As time passed, HMT indigenised the quartz range. Right down to the battery, which today meets international standards. Furthermore, quartz technology was given many more forms. Ana-Digi. Elegance, a designer quartz collection. Pace, a fashionable polyamide. And Astra, India's first digital range.

Today, HMT is proud of a range that is complete and striking. In a way, the HMT quartz range is a movement towards the people.Their tastes. And needs. After all, of what use is technology of our times if it is not for people of our times?

hmt QUARTZ

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QUARTZ

TECHNOLOGY OF OUR TIMES. FOR PEOPLE OF OUR TIMES.

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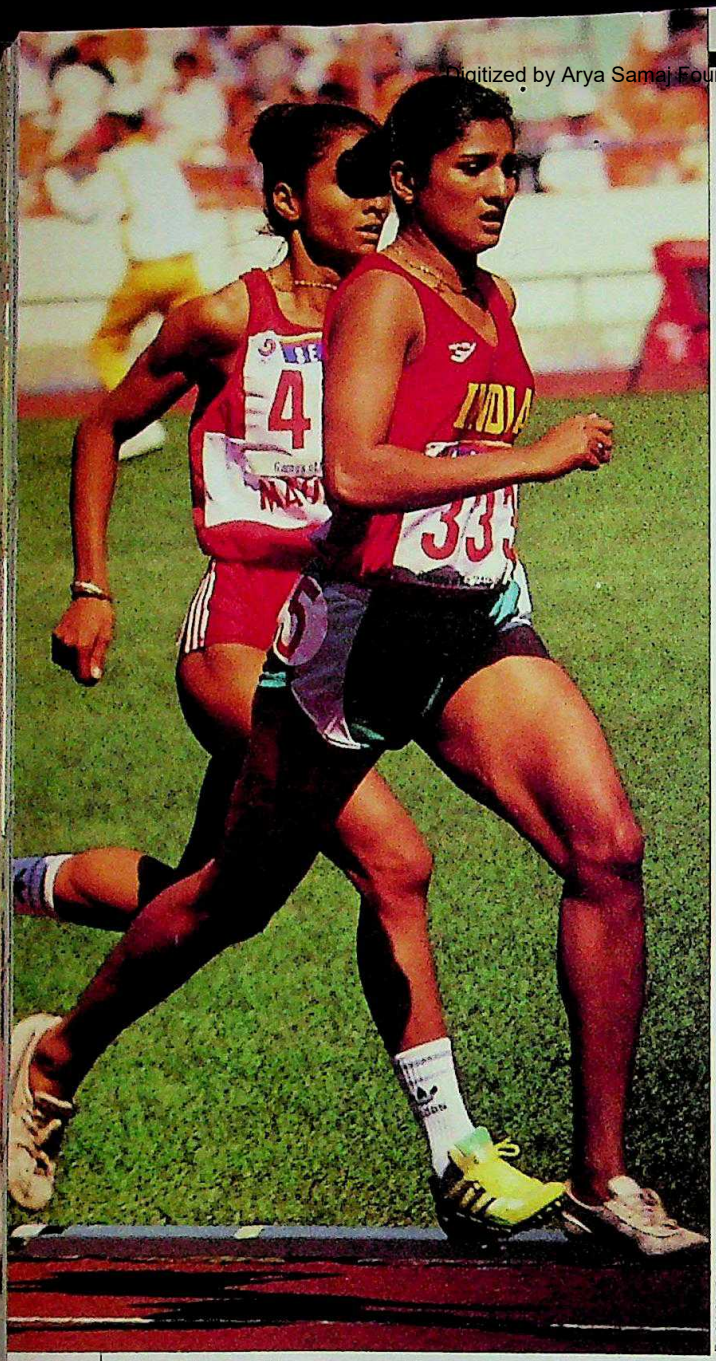

BHAWAN SINGH

Shiny Wilson stood out in a barren field

ON THE RUN

P.T. USHA PASSED INTO HISTORY AND SO, IT APPEARED, DID INDIAN ATHLETICS. SHINY SAVED SOME FACE BUT THE SPORT WAS CLEARLY RUNNING IN A FAMILIAR LANE.

faded into obscurity and left the tennis scene, woefully short on promise and potential. Whether Paes pays off or not, the lack of talent is a depressing forecast for the future.

ATHLETICS jogged along a similar course. P.T. Usha's retirement from the scene had been seemingly compensated by the ascendancy of talent like Ashwini Nachappa and Zenia Ayrton. It took just one meet, the Asian Track and Field Championships at Kuala Lumpur, to put paid to that particular dream. The indefatigable Shiny Wilson shone with two golds and a silver medal. But the rest of the Indian contingent could only contribute another two silver medals and a similar number of bronzes. The meagre medal haul turned out to be the good news. The bad news was that officials hadn't even cleared Shiny for the meet. Or any of the other female athletes who bagged a majority of medals. The Sports Ministry, in its infantile wisdom, had only cleared a four-member all-male team. The women reached Kuala Lumpur only after an unseemly battle, and that too with conditionalities attached to their participation. None of the original four sportsmen came back with a medal. The lessons from that unsavoury episode were clearly lost in the dialogue of the deaf that dominates officialdom. At the SAF Games in Colombo, in December, India's athletic dominance of the region was even threatened by hosts Sri Lanka. It's bye bye Barcelona even before the Olympics begin.

That signature song also bore an uncanny resemblance to the dribbling and buck-passing in hockey. Mid-year witnessed euphoria, again illusory, with an Indian triumph in a six-nation tourney in Malaysia against some convincing competition: Pakistan, New Zealand, South Korea and the Soviet Union. The tabloids went to town: 'An Indian Resurgence,' 'An Epoch begins at Ipoh'. True, the resilient Pargat Singh showed why he was rated among the best players in the world. The rest of the team, inspired by his example, played like, well.... a team.

Two months later, Pargat had tears streaming down his leathery cheeks as the hockey team messed things up with a patchy display at Auckland, a qualifying tournament that booked regional berths for Barcelona. Though India scrabbled together enough points to qualify, a draw against unfancied France, and a pathetic loss to Malaysia underlined the deficiencies. Virtually the same team had humbled Malaysia 4-1 at Ipoh.

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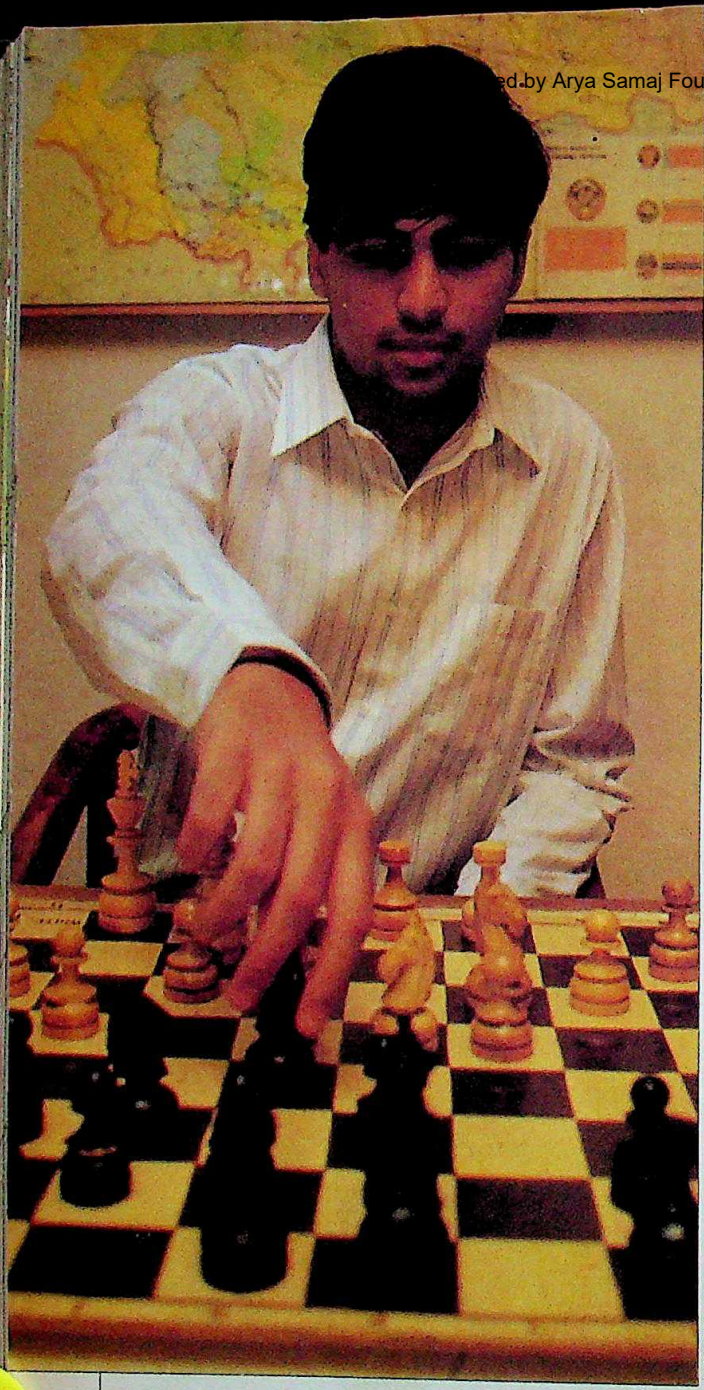

SHARAD SAXENA

Viswanathan Anand: master of the game

KINGDOM COME

ANAND SPEARHEADED A SENSATIONAL YEAR FOR INDIA ON THE INTERNATIONAL CHESS SCENE. OVERNIGHT, THERE WAS AN ABUNDANCE OF KINGS; AND EVEN A QUEEN.

Also-running was becoming contagious.

What saved Indian sports from universal ignominy was its growing tribe of grandmasters. Chess is not exactly a mass spectator sport in the country. Which perhaps explains why the sport has taken such spectacular strides. With no bureaucrats around to indulge in their favourite game of checkmating players, India stunned the international chess scene with the abundance of its talent. The numbers tell the story. Two Grandmasters. Fourteen International Masters. Six International Women Masters. Barely a few years ago, India had just one International Master—Manuel Aaron. In 1986, India had 50 rated players on the international scene. Today, the country has over 100.

THE man who most symbolises India's success story is Viswanathan Anand. Just 21 years of age, Anand has taken the chess world by storm. World Junior Champion. India's first Grandmaster. This year, he became the first Indian to reach the quarter finals of the World Chess Championship cycle. More was to follow. A win over legendary former world champion Anatoly Karpov followed by a historic triumph over world champion Gary Kasparov boosted his confidence and his international rating. He was ranked ninth in the world in 1991, a fantastic feat by any standards.

Anand's dizzying year somewhat dimmed the brilliance of two other chess wizards, Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua and Praveen Thipsay. Thipsay's wife, Bhagyashree, is another great Indian hope having clinched the Asian Women's Chess Champion title this year and a host of other major wins already under her belt. That remarkable resurgence is certain to continue with a horde of talented youngsters waiting in the wings. Most notably, an eight-year-old called Surya Shekhar Ganguly who grabbed third spot in the World Under-10 championships. Soviet Grandmaster Gufeld predicts that Ganguly will become world champion by the year 2005, by which time chess could be the only sport where India can boast of being on top of the world.

The rest, symbolised by the cricket team's inconsistency in Australia, seems buried down under a tangle of official apathy and selfishness, lack of resources and motivation and, above all, an embarrassing shortage of talent. But ultimately, in an era when competitiveness became an obsession, Indian sportsmen exposed their greatest collective deficiency—the will to win. ◆

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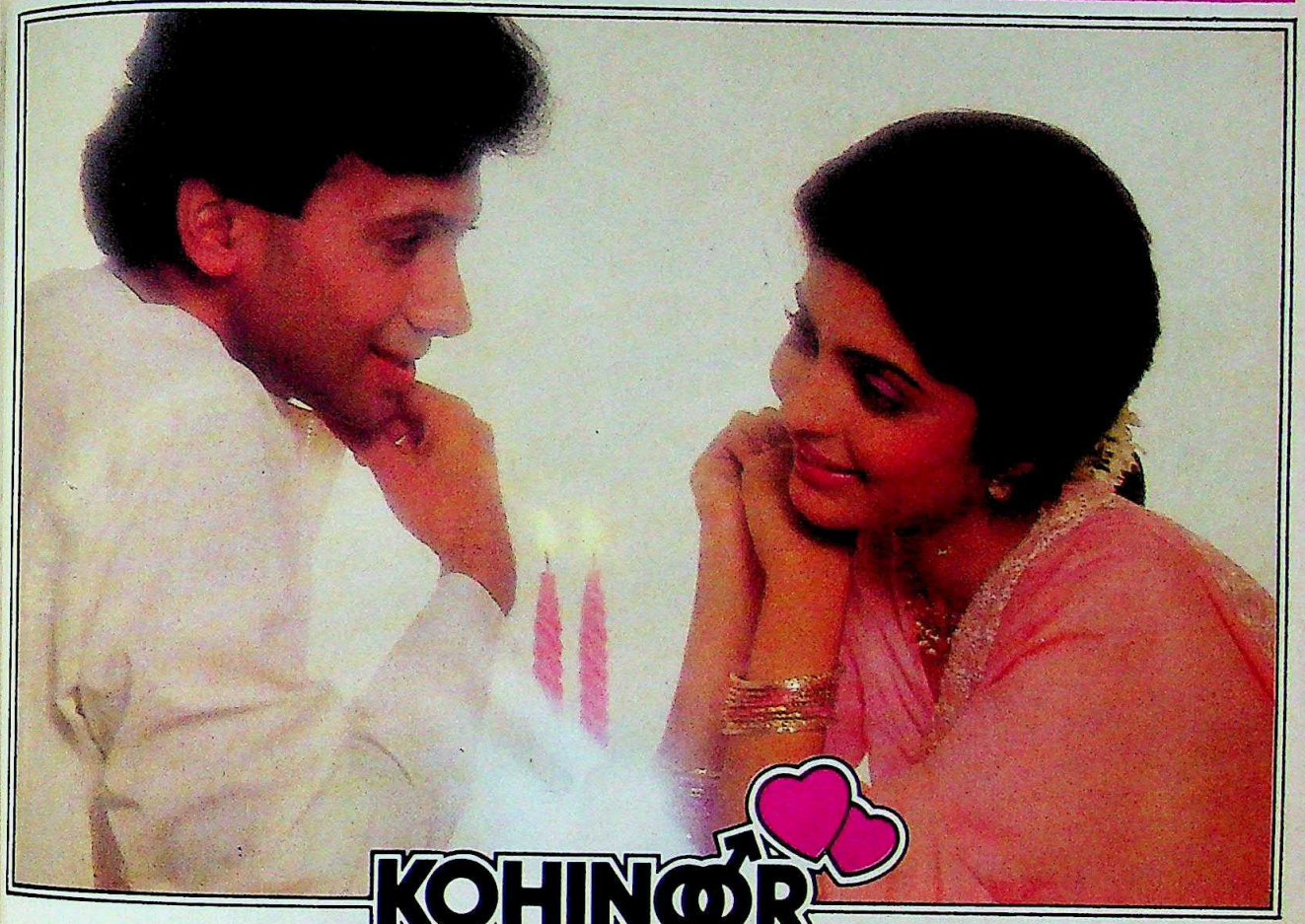
HOW TO FALL IN LOVE ALL OVER AGAIN AFTER YOUR FIRST BABY



KOHINOOR

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Till now there were just the two of you. With all the time in the world for each other. Now there are three. And it's time to enter another phase of happiness. We know it takes effort. To manage a wailing baby, bottle feeds, diaper changes and perhaps a resentful husband. You need time and space. To master your new role as mother and wife. And not have to cope with another pregnancy till your baby is a little older.

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Millions of young couples space their children with Kohinoor confidence. Kohinoor gives you the near natural feeling of total pleasure without interfering with the closeness you share. It's made of the finest latex and electronically tested to make it completely safe. By people who understand your need for privacy and protection. Ask for it by name. Kohinoor. And share the Kohinoor confidence.

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A LK Product

Plan your family with Kohinoor confidence.

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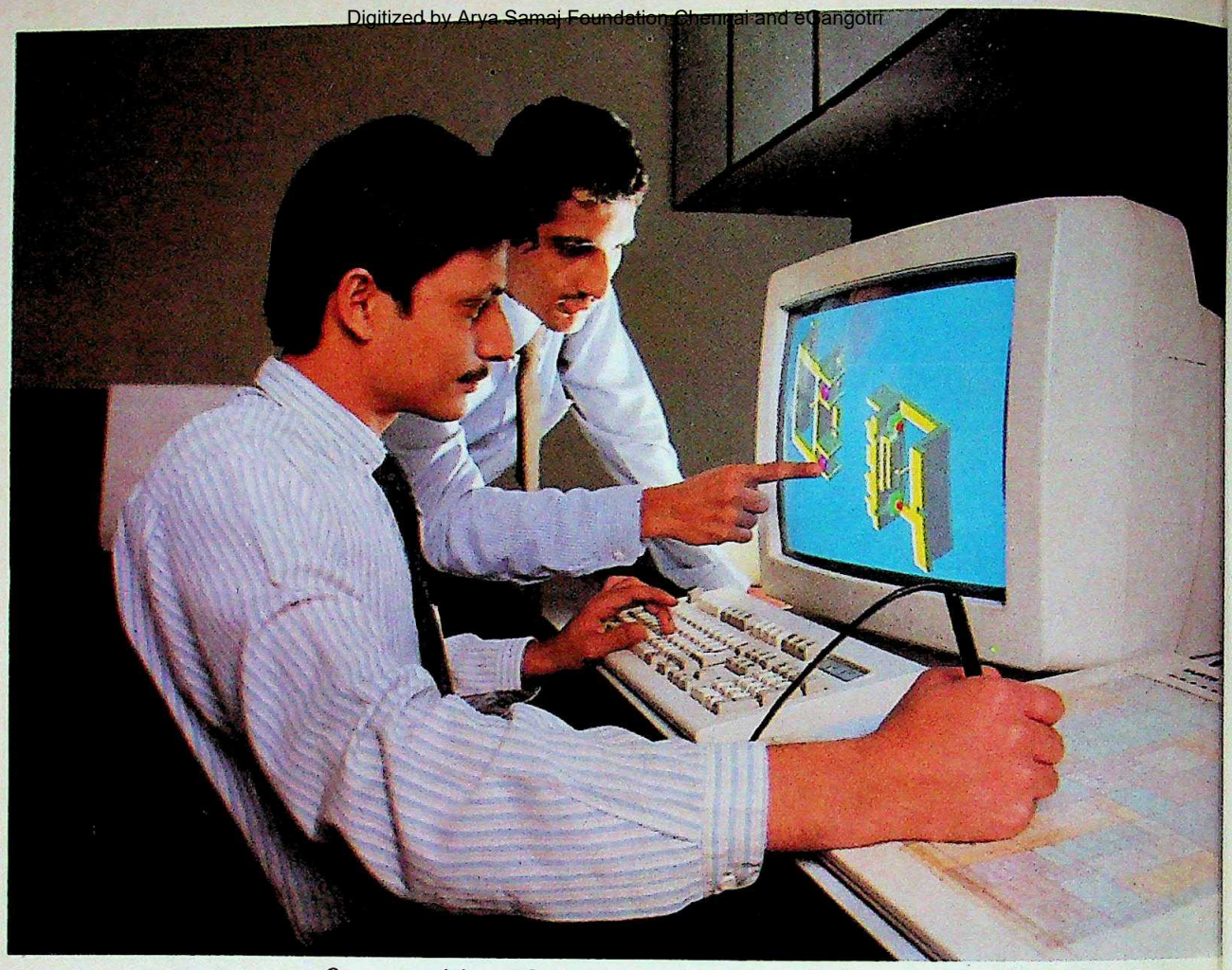

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SCUDS, & SEX & STAR TV

SACK the dhobi and buy a washing-machine. Two lakh people did so in 1991 and it quickly became a middle class status symbol. Servant problems? No problem. A microwave oven will lighten the load. Bored with Doordarshan? Invest in a dish antenna and tune in to CNN. Or even better, four channels of Star TV. (Five if you speak Chinese.) Throwing a party? A host of entrepreneurs will decorate the house in your choice of theme, supply the food, flowers and drinks, even set up a Karaoke system so the guests can mimic Madonna.

You don't even have to pay right away. Any one of the sheaf of credit cards in your wallet will do. Tired of shopping and traffic jams? Just pick anything you want—clothes, consumer goods, kitchenware, curtains, et al—from a range of mail order catalogues.

The symbols were everywhere. Snaky lines outside petrol stations during the February fuel crunch and an equally lengthy line for Maruti 1000s priced at over Rs 4 lakh a piece. A government with 54 MPs and an extravagant plan to erect Disneyland in the heart of rural Haryana. India's paradoxes were once again on parade in 1991 and the year only seemed to sharpen their contours.

DIAMONDS AND THE KAMA SUTRA

Nothing illustrated that more forcefully than a multi-millionaire Ahmedabad diamond merchant renouncing the world in a ceremony that was so dazzlingly extravagant it made the sheikhs of Saudi Arabia look like paupers in comparison. Diamonds, gold coins and precious jewels flung to the crowds, a silver-plated chariot drawn by seven caparisoned elephants followed by 50 expensively-decorated horses, 40 camel carts and a procession of dancers and folk troupes.

It was the ultimate confrontation between God and Mammon; and Mammon was clearly winning. The gems flung to the frenzied crowds were worth Rs 2.50 lakh. And, the body that Atul Kumar Shah was offering to God and Jainism was adorned with jewellery worth over Rs 60 lakh. Thus spake spiritualism in 1991.

That single act somehow accentuated the year. Bolder, brassier and breaking out of the social strait-jacket that had constricted decades of Indian life. Pooja Bedi and her blatantly sensual Kama Sutra condom advertisement was just one example of the kind of daring creeping into commercialism. On screen, Shilpa Shirodkar was doing much the same thing with nary a peep from the puritans. As Bedi quipped: "I have to show off my personal assets. Not those of my maid." India even hosted an international conference on orgasm in February. The chief guest: Vasant Sathe, a Congress(I) MP. The valedictory address was given by the Union minister for health.

BAWDY LANGUAGE, BODY TALK

There were other signs of the new social glasnost. The *mujra* shed its tawdry, decadent image and acquired a new respectability with its spreading popularity in upper and middle class living-rooms. Out in the parks and cinema halls, dating declared itself to be a classless phenomenon and embracing couples became as common a sight as peanut sellers and paunchy policemen. *Debonair*, which was edited by a woman, emerged more deliberately male-oriented and Penguin, the venerable publishers, didn't blush twice over publishing Shobha De's *Starry Nights* with its explicit bedroom scenes and bawdy language.

But it was body language that was talking the most in 1991, and not just in advertising or cinema. The fashion revolution of the '80s and changing social mores inspired a new daring in dress codes and design. The fitness craze and slimming centres now available in almost every urban colony had done much to change the traditionally matronly

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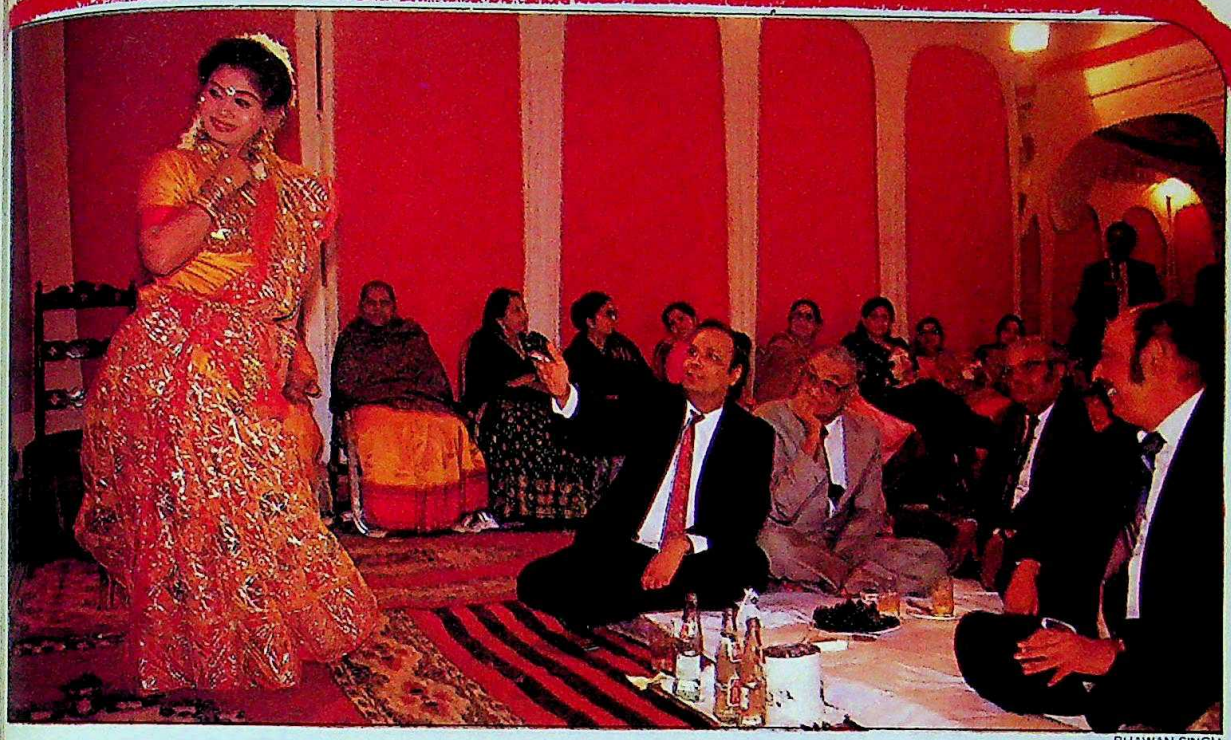
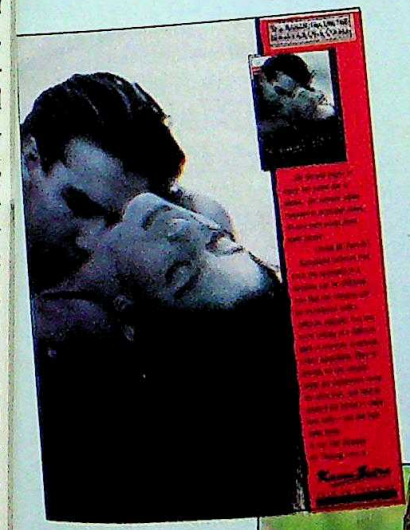
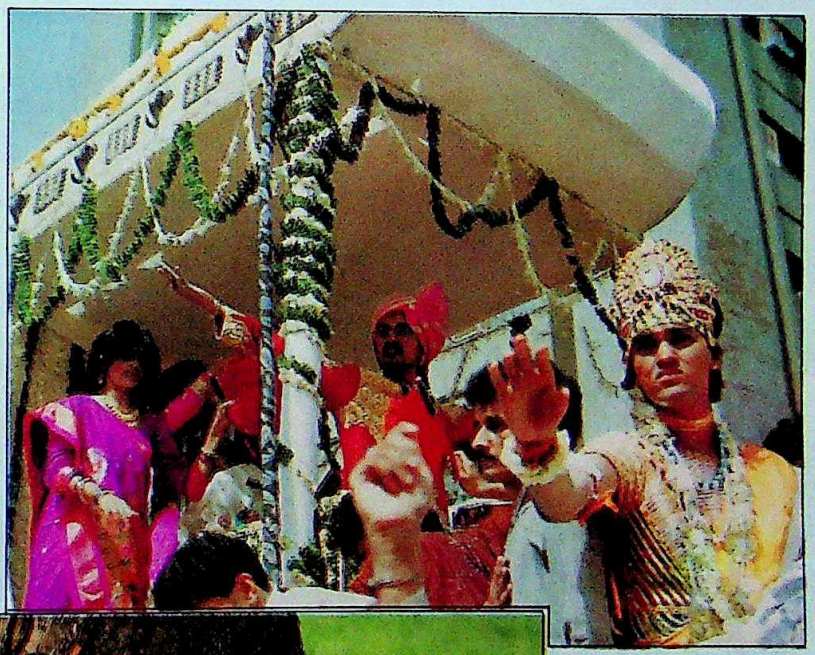


BHAWAN SINGH

▲ Old becomes bold. The *mujra* resurfaced in style, in an upmarket avatar, in the living rooms of the rich and the trendy.



▲ The Year of the Hard Sell. The Kama Sutra campaign symbolised the inroads the sexual revolution had made into Indian society.



ADITYA MEHTA/ABHIYAN

▲ Atul Shah renounces the world in a cascade of diamonds.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

◄ Dating revealed itself to be a classless phenomenon, more open, and more acceptable.

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contours of Indian womanhood. The availability and variety of ensembles did the rest. Looking good also meant looking sexy. As Amrita Shah, *Debonair's* editor remarked: "The kind of girls who want to pose for us are proud of the fact that they have beautiful bodies."

PRIME TIME IS ANYTIME

The winds of change were clearly blowing with greater gusto in 1991 and morals and mores weren't the only things being tossed out with the jacuzzi water. Easily the most dramatic revolution took place on the television screen. 1991 was the year when India ended decades of isolation from the rest of the world. CNN arrived in January, literally with a bang. The buildup to the Gulf War may have been fortuitous timing but it suddenly opened up a whole new world for urban India. The country was literally hooked to the drama unfolding right in their living-rooms as Scuds and Patriots zoomed across the small screen and satellite dishes sprouted on roof-tops.

Overnight, Doordarshan's monotonous mediocrity—and its monopoly—was under threat and there was nothing Mandi House could do. Barely had the Gulf War ended in late February when the arrival of Star TV in April rained down saturation coverage from the skies. With five channels on offer and round-the-clock broadcasting, prime time was now any time. The spread of cable TV had already given urban households a choice. Star TV, dedicated to the Asian region, made it multiple. The Government's helplessness and the invasion of satellite TV was evident in I&B Minister Ajit Panja's brusque statement: "Do you expect me to hire a helicopter and confiscate every satellite dish in the country?"

Much of the television revolution was aided by a parallel slide in the quality of Doordarshan's programmes. With the exception of Sanjay Khan's *Sword of Tipu Sultan* early in the year and the lavishly-produced *Chanakya* which followed it on Sunday mornings, Mandi House's bureaucratic befuddlement ensured that Indian television stayed on the sidelines.

In contrast to the host of stars who invaded the small screen in the '80s—Pankaj Kapoor, Dilip Dhawan, Neena Gupta, Priya Tendulkar, Alok Nath, Aneeta Kanwar—1991 saw only two stars shine with any glory; teenage heart-throb Shah Rukh Khan and sultry siren Pallavi Joshi. Both, however, admit that television is only a launch pad for cinema.

What did improve dramatically was television advertising. Infinitely more slick, subtle and stylish, special effects and technological advances turned it into an attention-grabbing visual art. Pepsi, Taj Tea, Thums Up's 'Taste the Thunder', Graveira Suitings, Vimal, MRF tyres, Kawasaki and, of course, Pooja Bedi's famous Kama Sutra number changed the face of television advertising. Most TV addicts and children were, in fact, enjoying the advertising more than the actual programmes.

PUPPIES AND PAPAS

However, the most eye-catching ads—the hard-sell for safe sex—didn't seem to be having much effect on the population at large. The end-March census pegged India's population at 844 million. Family planning was clearly a low priority area for Indian society. But in other areas, the traditional image of the Indian family was undergoing radical change. Much of that had to do with the changing Indian woman. The '80s cracked opened the door and 1991 saw them striding out with a new confidence and independence, finally, and forcefully, breaking free from the taboos that had chained them to the kitchen table and the joint family syndrome.

> *Bolder, brassier and breaking out of social straight-jackets. 1991 saw some dramatic changes in the air and in attitudes.*

The proliferation of women entrepreneurs was a visible symbol as was the increasing number of females in the work force, occupying senior managerial and decision-making positions and on equal terms with their male counterparts. That independence, financial and emotional, has perhaps changed forever the stereotyped husband-wife relationship, now more evenly balanced than ever before, and its impact on urban Indian society was increasingly being felt.

Taboos such as divorce, second marriages, adoptions and working wives were clearly a thing of the past, and with it, the traditional parameters of parenthood. The baby boomers had survived

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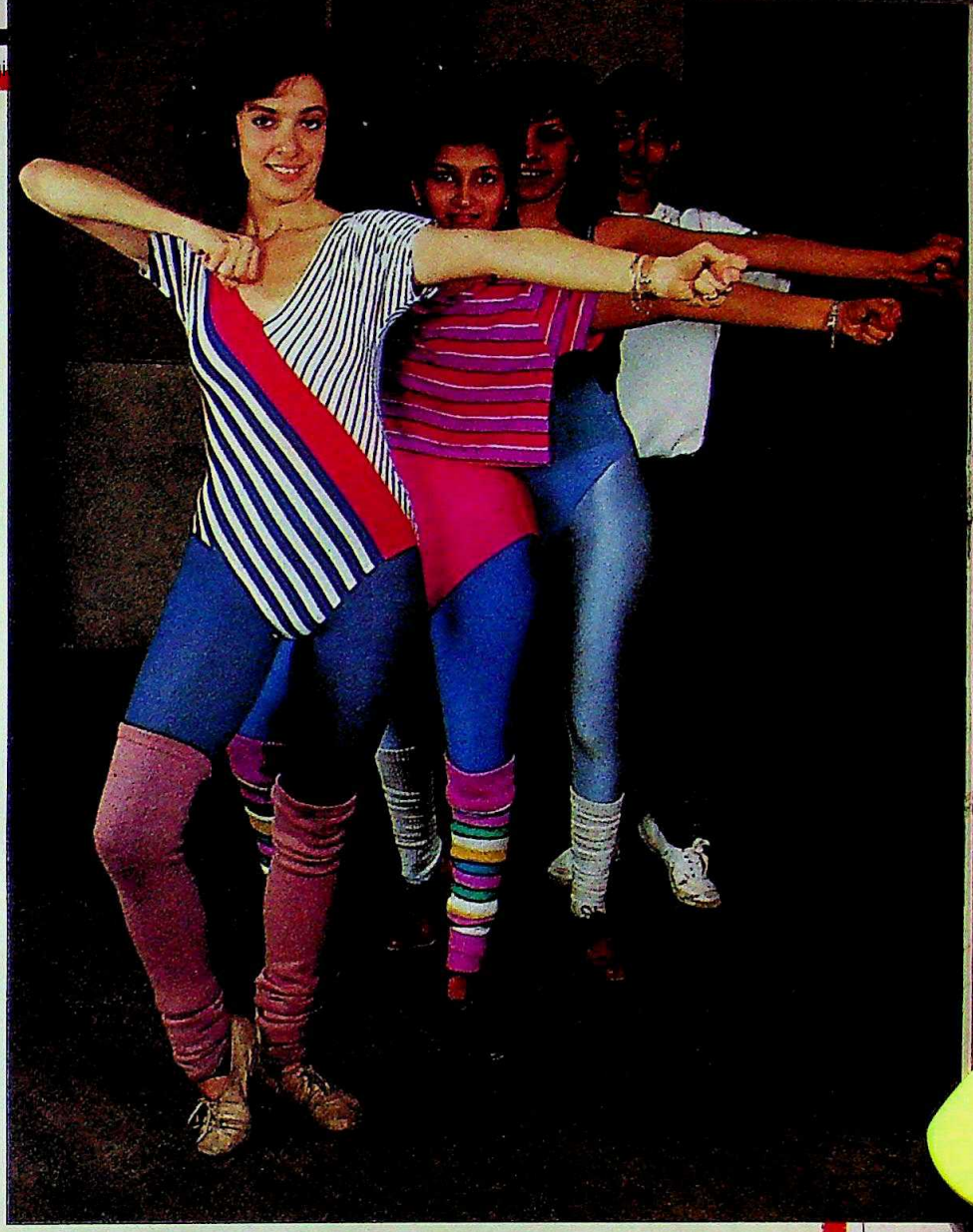
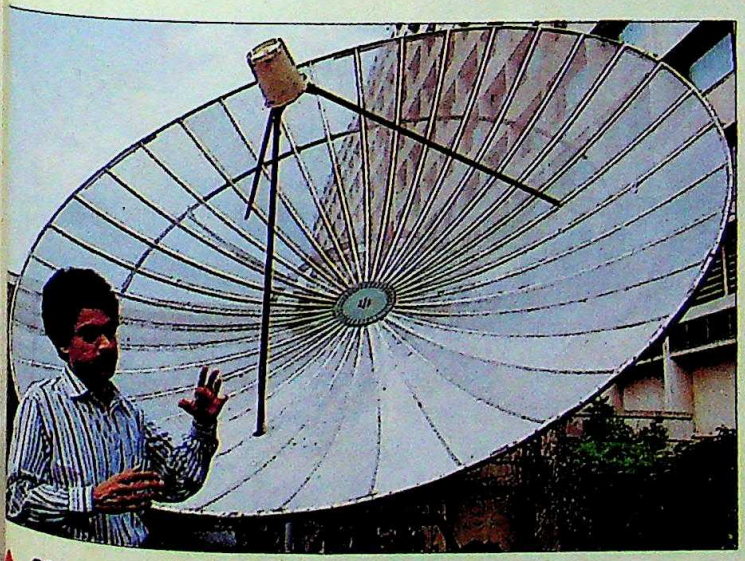
▲ Epics apart, Doordarshan continued to send out invitations to boredom.



▲ Indian women shed their matronly mein with the health club boom.



▲ CNN, Star TV and dish antennas: sky's the limit.

▲ Ad Fad. Slicker and more subtle, advertising becomes a visual treat.

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puppiedom and were busy flaunting their fatherhood with the same enthusiasm they once displayed for unbuttoned shirts and bootleg scotch. One hospital, Bombay's Breach Candy, reported that fathers were actually present during 80 per cent of childbirths. And, according to resident gynaecologist Usha Krishna: "The number of men interested in witnessing the process of childbirth has quadrupled in the past two years."

Certainly, the signs that Indian men were getting actively involved in the upbringing and education of their children, once considered the wife's sole responsibility, were everywhere. The fathers present at parent-teacher meetings, now the norm rather than an exception in Indian schools, often outnumber the mothers. Whether it was helping with the homework at home, changing nappies or shopping with the children, urban Indian fathers were undergoing a visible change of role.

AGE-OLD PROBLEMS.

But while the baby boomers were basking in the social spotlight, India was also imperceptibly ageing. By the turn of the century, there will be 76 million Indians over the age of 60, up from just 33 million in 1971. Coupled with the growing generation gap and the collapse of the joint family system, being old in India no longer meant being comfortable. Rapid urbanisation and the space crunch drove a wedge between the old and the rest, and the financial pressures of modern living relegated grand-parents to the excess baggage hold. The sociological problems that crisis could create is still in its infancy but it is one that India will find difficult to face by the time the year 2000 comes a calling.

One reason for the ageing of India was that life expectancy in the country had risen to 62 years in 1991, up from 54 a decade ago. And, the end-December UNICEF state of the children report revealed a parallel drop in infant mortality, from 250 per thousand some years ago to 146, another sign that health standards in rural India were imperceptibly improving, as were literacy levels. Kerala, in fact, achieved 100 per cent literacy during the year and the economic upheaval of the Gulf War proved to be just a temporary set-back to the traditionally ostentatious living of its citizens.

CLIMAX AND ANTICLIMAX

What did stop was scandals and sleaze. The Ajitabh Bachchan case was stamped 'Closed' by the Chandra Shekhar government and Bofors was given a final burial by his successor, P.V. Narasimha Rao. In the end, they became forceful enough symbols; scandals and financial skulduggery were no longer fashionable. In retrospect, it was only the breaking of the BCCI banking affair that provided any fresh fodder for the sensation-addicts. But even that affected India only indirectly. Ultimately, the only scandals that surfaced were confined to the more lurid movie magazines.

Even the most sensational crime of the year: the kidnapping of a gaggle of gullible diamond merchants from Bombay, turned out to be something of a farce. After threatening to turn into a tension-ridden thriller, complete with criminal masterminds and mind-boggling ransom demands, it deflated into an anticlimax with the arrest of one of the victims and a tame end to the drama. Who had done what and to whom remained unclear but nobody cared very much. As grocery shelves indicated, everything was becoming instant, including attention spans. In May, a dynasty ended in explosive circumstances. By December, Rajiv Gandhi was all but forgotten.

From families to fashion, in the last decade of the 20th century, India was getting more in tune with the times.

Some things, of course, never change. Despite Devi Lal's attempts to ruralise India—very few villagers took up his offer to dine in five-star splendour at subsidised rates—the rural-urban divide was still in stark evidence. It was, in fact, the small towns that witnessed the most dramatic changes. The sight of women, young and old, astride scooters and mopeds, ushered in an unheard of mobility and independence into their lives, already transformed by the consumer revolution that had swamped the countryside.

In fact, what did bridge the rural divide in some manner was the reverse flow of urbanites escaping the rat race to unwind in the peace and tranquillity of rustic surroundings. The farmhouse fad had

▲ Home fantasies

Illustrations by JAYANTO

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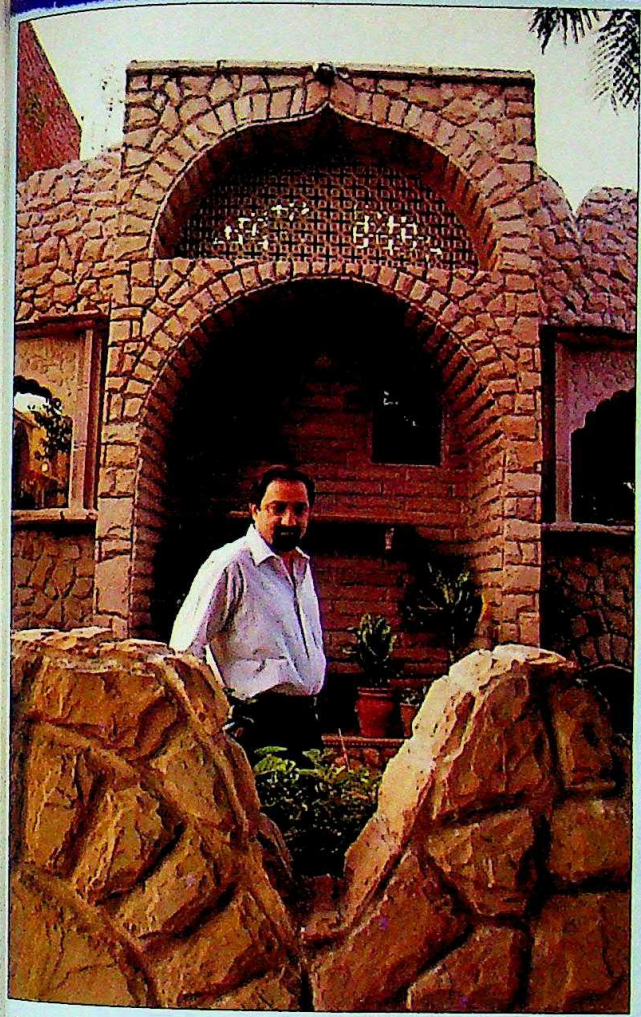
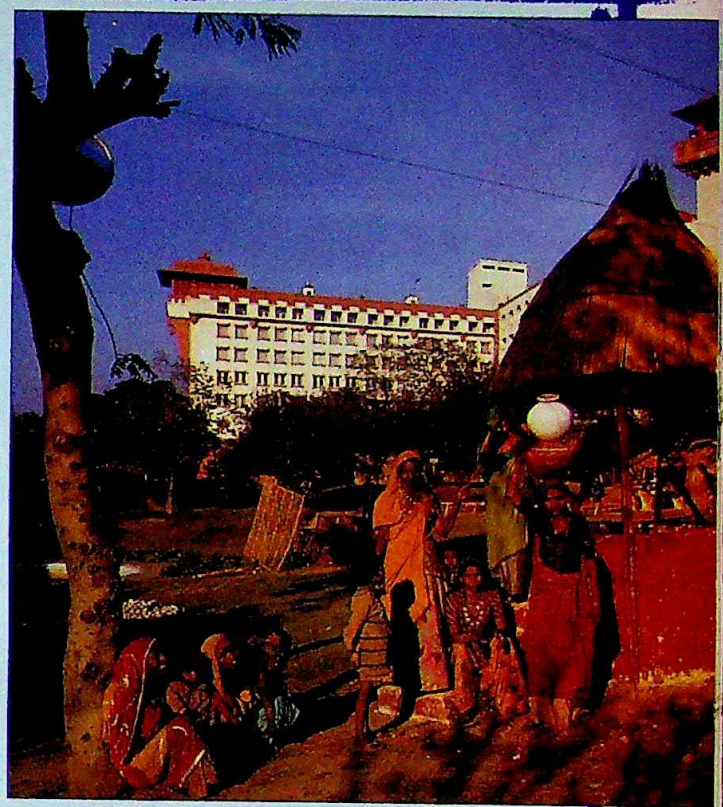
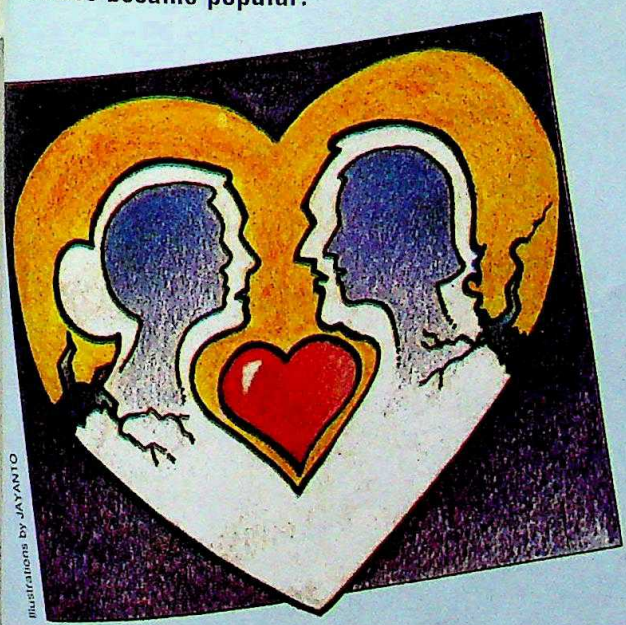


▲ Homes reliving some bizzare fantasies became popular.



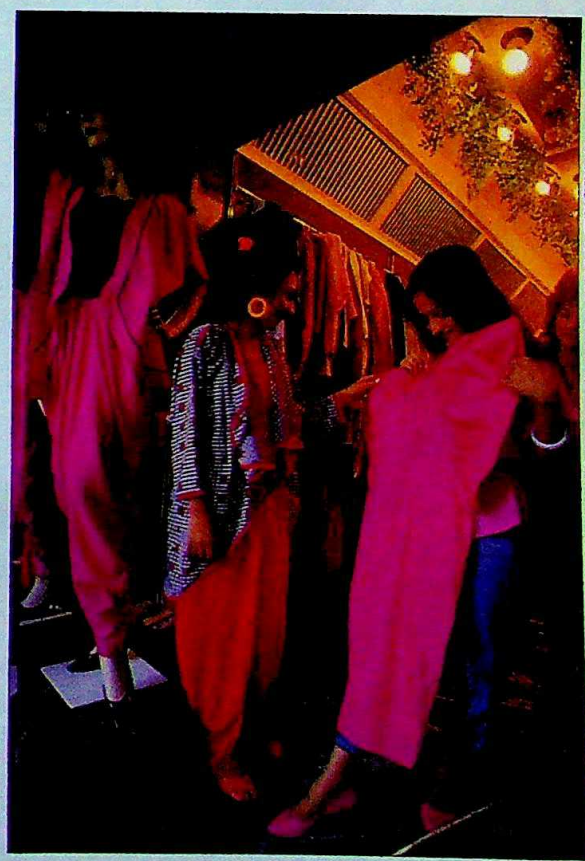
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

▲ Five-star fare for ruralites turned farcical.



Illustrations by JAYANTO

▲ Second marriages get more popular.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

▲ Haute couture for every occasion and pocket.

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originally started as a weekend retreat for affluent urbanites. But it has quickly triggered a major exodus as an increasing number of people from crowded cities moved away from urban centres to build or buy homes on the outskirts.

With real-estate developers responding to the trend, new townships are springing up, complete with clubs, shopping centres, schools and playgrounds. Middle India was being given rapid birth. In the end, it was one more manifestation of the pressures of a modern society, now visible in almost every aspect of daily life.

NURSING A HANGOVER

In essence, however, the most visible trends in Indian society over the year were dictated by the economic changes. Double digit inflation and credit curbs put a psychological brake on the extravagance of the '80s. Quality now counted more than quantity and consumers were definitely more discerning about what they were buying. That was evident in the marked emphasis on design and durability over the year as far as most consumer items were concerned. From umbrellas to underwear, water faucets to watches, kitchenware to kitsch, the market-place was finally showing signs of becoming consumer-friendly.

> *Design went contemporary, art became controversial and indigenous writting went places over the past year.*

Even art was affected. The celebrity-oriented art auctions of recent years where paintings fetched 10 lakh each, had petered out. The only noteworthy art auction for a prominent charity proved something of a damp squib and art prices stabilised after almost a decade of hitting the proverbial roof. But eventually, it was the hue and cry over the authenticity of a display of paintings by the late and legendary artist K.H. Ara that raised the most questions of morals and ethics in the art world and the true worth of contemporary works.

In other areas, there was an equally visible tightening of the creative belt. Theatre, music and dance produced nothing outstanding or even ostentatious. The epic concerts sparked by the ghazal boom, the all-night music recitals and the glitzy, private sponsorship of the classical arts took a backseat in 1991. But it was also a clear sign that talent, in the form of new faces on the artistic horizon, was getting few and further between.

Instead, it was canned music that was bouncing to a new and profitable beat as the music industry recorded its best year for decades. An incredible 45 new cassettes were hitting the market every month and the arrival of CDs and more advanced music systems further fuelled the boom. Sophisticated recording and better packaging gave classical music a new lease of life but it was pop that called the market tune.

Equally upbeat was the literary scene. The import curbs imposed by Manmohan Singh's budget placed foreign publications out of reach of most people but it also witnessed a coincidental flowering of indigenous publishing. Indian writing talent continued to bloom. Rohinton Mistry's superb novel *Such a Long Journey* made it to the final short-list for the Booker Prize, but fellow-Parsi Firdaus Kanga's second book *Heaven On Wheels* failed to match up to his first.

In India, Shobha De's keyhole look at Bollywood's bedrooms confirmed her as a *desi* Jackie Collins, while Shashi Tharoor's *Show Business*, also on the Indian film world, fortified his standing as an important writer. Nisha da Cunha, a self-confessed 'Sunday writer', finally published her short stories and the result was *Old Cypress*, a marvellous mosaic of fiction.

But it was political writing that created the biggest splash. Raj Thapar's posthumous publication, *All These Years*, a gossipy, inside account of Mrs Gandhi's imperious ways, M.J. Akbar's *Behind the Veil* which dealt with the Kashmir crisis, and the heated outpourings of former Kashmir governor Jagmohan in *My Frozen Turbulence*, a book that nevertheless topped the political best-seller list. For indigenous writing and publishing in 1991, as the title of Mark Tully's literary offering indicated, there were clearly no full stops.

1991, more than anything else, gave final burial to the universal myths about Indian society, myths about its timelessness, its ancient traditions and its tolerance. What uncoiled most forcefully from the embers of 1991 was the image of a society on the make, straining at the leash and impatient with the slowness of change. ◆

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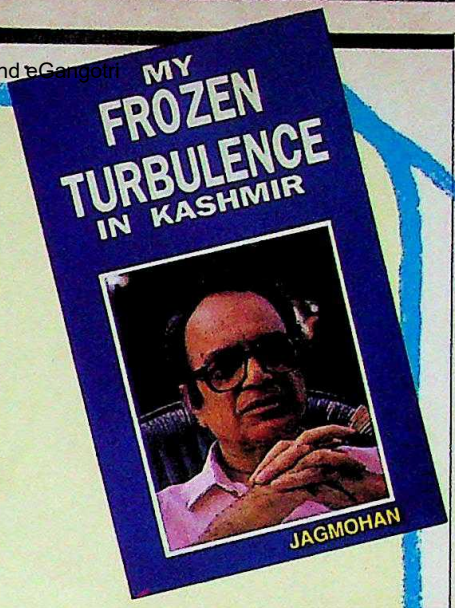
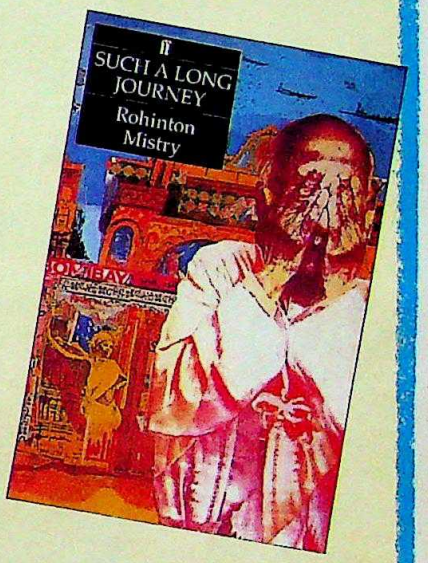
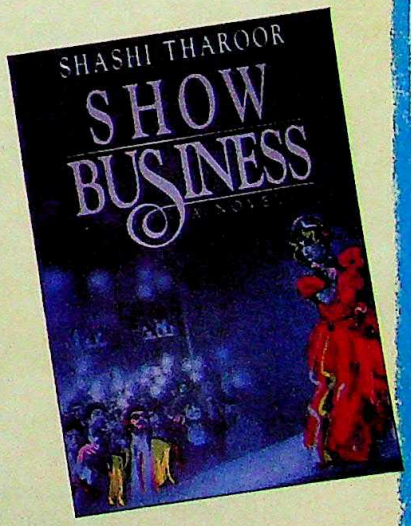
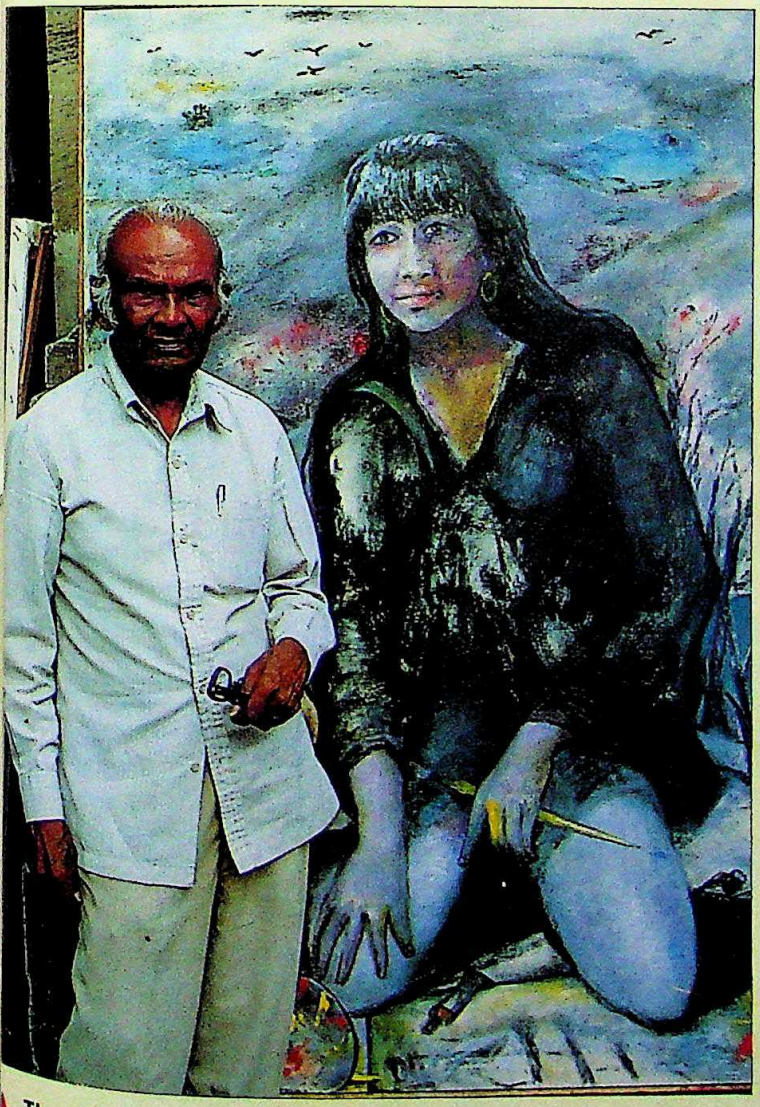
▲ From the kitchen to kitsch, design became consumer-oriented.







▲ Sex sold and so did politics, while the literary scene went boom.



▲ The Ara scandal raised doubts about contemporary art.

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Mrs. Sharma was losing sight by the day. Till one day ...

adily weakening eyesight is a common enough problem among elderly. It can, in cases, even lead to blindness. For some ous eye ailments, surgery is one possible solution. But Mrs. rma didn't see it that way. She was petrified at the prospect of operation. Fortunately for her, she met a Homoeopathic tor. And discovered the healing touch of Homoeopathy. eraria Maritima Schwabe – a Homoeopathic remedy – was ck to provide relief in her case. Now Mrs. Sharma looks only at moeopathy for all her problems. Indeed, Schwabe of Germany taken Homoeopathy's healing touch to all corners of the ld. Schwabe's remedies provide relief from countless serious day to day ailments. The remedies are over 2,500 in number. h one is created to do one and only one thing. Heal in a manner is prompt, safe, durable and without side-effects. For more rmation on Homoeopathy's healing touch, mail the coupon.

Please send me your free booklet "The Healing Touch of Homoeopathy."

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T6

SCHWABE
125 YEARS

THE HEALING TOUCH OF HOMOEOPATHY

LINTAS (DELHI)/SCH/5A/3726

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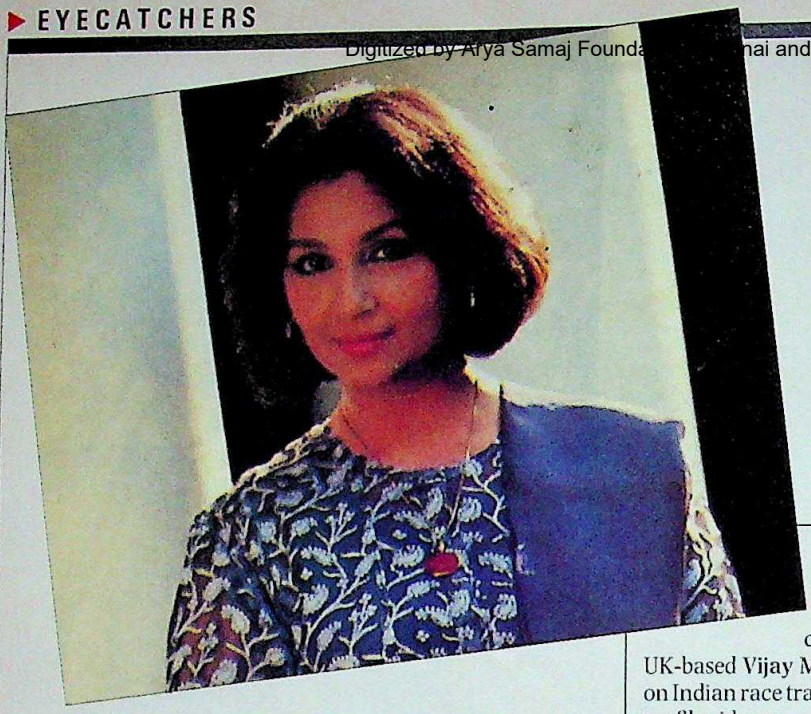


"I didn't know about my son's wedding with Amrita although I was in Bombay at the time. It was an impulsive act on their part but they have my blessings."

—SHARMILA TAGORE
Film actress

AN ATTRACTIVE EYE-WITNESS

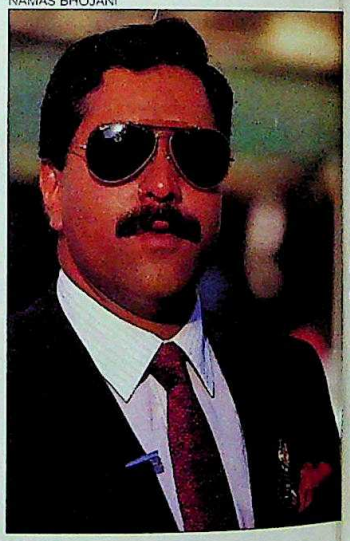
◆ Mother, model and now the media. For **Sharmila Tagore**, there always seems to be something happening to keep her in soft focus. With hubby Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, they quickly became advertising's favourite couple. Clearly not satisfied with centre-spreads and cuddling fluffy lambs in television advertisements, she switched to being the main madam at Eye-Witness, the video newsmagazine launched early this year. After a hesitant start, La Tagore seems to have caught the media bug, clearly growing in confidence and enjoying her anchor role. But it is her film connection which makes the biggest impact, introducing an easy familiarity with celebrities from Bollywood. Only she could get away with telling Shashi Kapoor: "Well, there's lots more of you now but we love you anyway." But it was the mother role that caused discomfort—over son Saif's secret wedding. Her indignant denial and subsequent acceptance ended the year for her on a somewhat embarrassing note.

RUNNING OUT OF HORSEPOWER

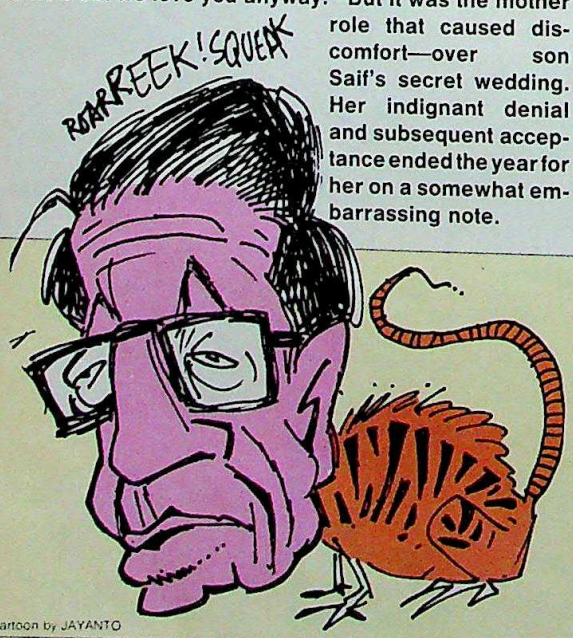
◆ For India's most flamboyant NRI, it certainly wasn't his favourite year. Though UK-based **Vijay Mallya**'s favourites continued to canter home on Indian race tracks and his flagship UB group released a high-profile video cassette called *Horsepower* on thoroughbred racing in India, his own horsepower was starting to flag.

In fact, Mallya eventually threatened to pull out of horse-racing over the messy manner in which he claimed the industry was being run. By December, however, it was the way his own industry was being run that was causing concern. His bid to sell off expendable units had run into a corporate-legal tangle and his conglomerate faced a serious cash-crunch. "It's ridiculous to suggest I'm broke," declared an indignant Mallya. Having celebrated his 36th birthday, it may be early days yet. But for the first time since he succeeded his father as chairman in 1983, it appeared that the high-flying tycoon's private jet was flying into turbulent weather.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Mallya: a rough ride



Cartoon by JAYANTO

THE TIGER'S ROAR BECOMES A WHIMPER

◆ The tiger's roar reverberted through Bombay's Wankhede Stadium as controversial Shiv Sena supremo **Bal Thackeray** orchestrated an end to the Indo-Pakistan cricket series. It was a dramatic return to the limelight and a rude reminder of who calls the militant Hindu tune in Maharashtra. But by year-end, the king of the political jungle had his fangs pulled out by a split in the Sena—the first in its history. Though the bluster remained ("As long as I am around, the control of the party will remain with me"), the roar had clearly been reduced to a whimper.

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MINOR MARRIAGE

◆ For years, the Arab influx into Hyderabad revolved around one controversial objective—the search for young brides for Middle Eastern males. But it took a gusty Indian Airlines air hostess to expose the racket in a dramatic manner. The poignant plight of Ameena, a 10-year-old Hyderabad girl sold off to a 60-year-old Arab, Yahya Segeih, by her poverty-struck parents for Rs 6,000 and the promise of a Gulf job for her auto rickshaw driver father, caused a national uproar and resulted in a jail sentence for Segeih—the first such case.

Ameena: child bride

But it was the human tragedy, brought to light by the air hostess, Amrita Ahluwalia, who came to the rescue of the sobbing minor in mid-flight, that caught the country's imagination. A spell in a remand home in the capital while the custody case dragged on in court, only served to heighten the child's trauma. Eventually however, she was reunited with her parents who, Ameena said, "promised that they will not marry me off again."

CELLULOID FANTASY

◆ Film maker **Rajiv Rai** took a leaf out of his superhit *Tridev*. Within days, Rai and his leading lady, **Sonam**, were married. The only one complaining was pater-producer Gulshan Rai, who said: "All the young ladies called me 'uncle' which was terrible."

Rajiv and Sonam

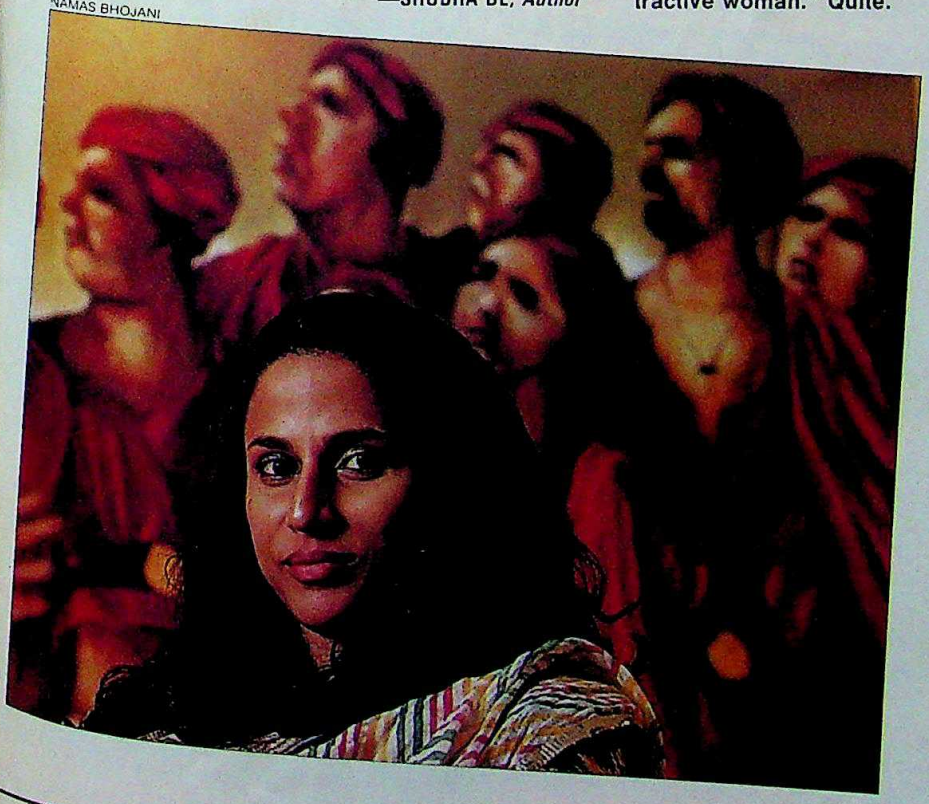
STARRY NIGHTS AND SEXY DE

◆ It's the looks rather than the books that seem to make all the difference. As she herself admitted once: "The editors insist on carrying a picture along with my columns." But for all that, **Shobha De**'s raunchy sizzler *Starry Nights* certainly hit a hot streak with its four-letter words and explicit sex scenes inviting comparisons with Jackie Collins. Her earlier literary effort, *Socialite Evenings* made less of a splash but had proved to be no less controversial in terms of its sexual content and its shock value.

For De, her stint as high-profile editor of *Stardust* and *Society* shows in her literary output—the bitchy and sensationalistic prose. But like herself, her columns seem to improve with age. Now 43, one divorce, a remarriage and four kids later, De is no less attractive than she was 20 years earlier when she first emerged as a supermodel. Her views on the subject are somewhat different. "I've never regarded myself as an overtly sexy woman," she says, adding, "but there are several advantages of being regarded as an attractive woman." Quite.

> "I have decided to write the mother of all pornographic books in 1992."
>
> —SHOBHA DE, *Author*

NAMAS BHOJANI



TRADITIONAL TIES

◆ The Amritraj brothers, despite their jet-set image, are clearly Indians at heart.

GEORGE FRANCIS/Scorp

Ashok and Chitranjali

When film maker **Ashok**—the youngest of the famed former tennis trio—tied the marital knot in Madras last September, it was to **Chitranjali**, a local lass who, in mother Maggie's words, is: "a traditional, home-loving, south Indian Catholic girl." Home, set and match.

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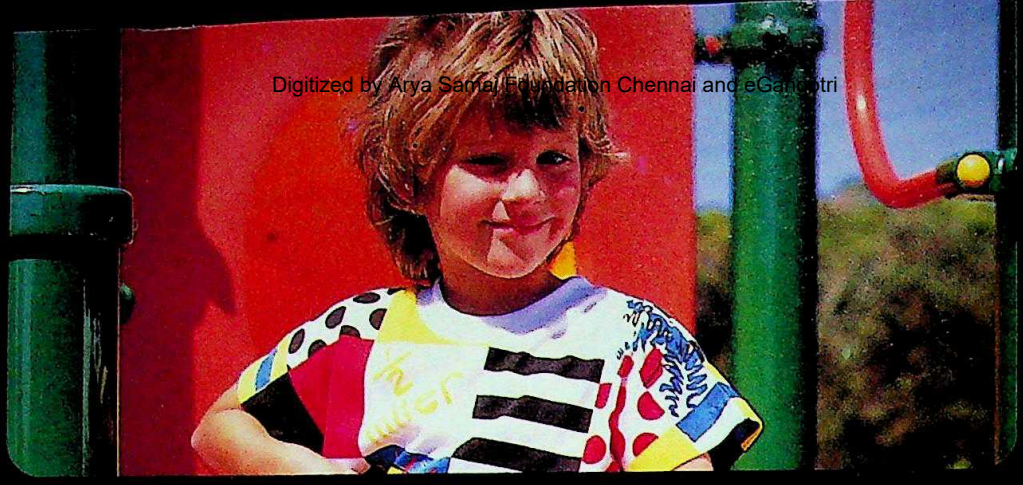

1,75,14,782 COLOR FILM ROLLS SOLD

MAKING SUPER PLUS INDIA'S BEST SELLING COLOR FILM.

The popularity of Super Plus keeps growing everyday. Making it India's best selling color film.

Photographers using Super Plus know that they are assured of sharp pictures and excellent color contrasts with every roll they shoot.

Super Plus. Another quality product from Jindal Photo Films Ltd. Makers of photographic color paper; medical and industrial x-ray films, and graphic arts film.

Super Plus 36 frames of superb color.

SUPER plus

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CONVERTED FROM FILM MADE IN JAPAN

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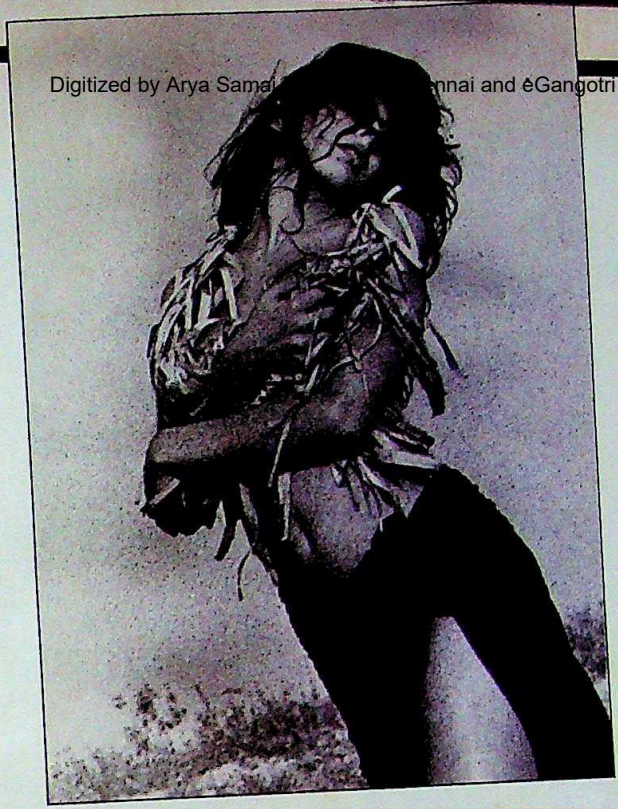
SEX AND THE SINGLE GIRL

◆ For someone who enjoys life in the fast lane, **Pooja Bedi** seemed just right to provide a different slant to the *Kama Sutra*. Her stunningly erotic pose for plugging a brand of condom with the same name as the ancient Indian classic on the joys of sex was something of a landmark in the history of Indian advertising. It became a landmark in other senses as well as she snuggled suggestively on street hoardings in Bombay. Hard sell is the way the outrageous lass likes it. Meanwhile, her film career seemed on hold—*Vishkanya* was a bit of a bomb. But the bombshell herself seems unstoppable: "My ambition is to be the sexiest woman in Bombay films." She's certainly headed in the right direction.

"My ambition is to be the sex symbol of Indian cinema. I know what my real assets are."

—POOJA BEDI, *Film actrers*



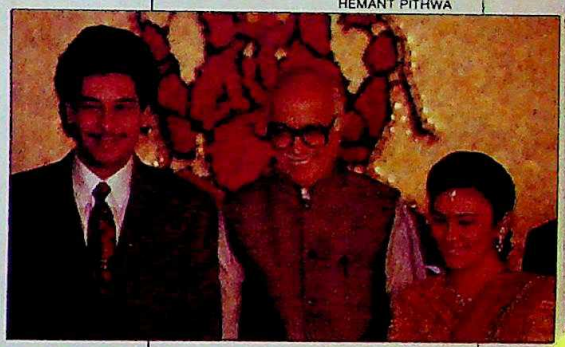
Pooja: sex sells

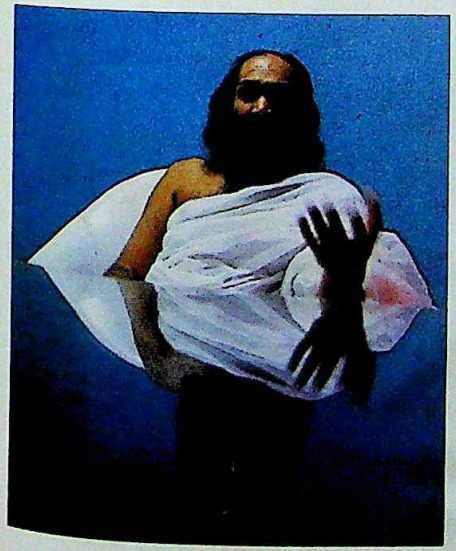
AN EPIC JOURNEY

◆ It's been an epic year. Having earned small-screen fame in the coveted role of Sita in Ramanand Sagar's modern depiction of the ancient classic *Ramayan*, she was then reincarnated as a BJP candidate for the general elections last June. In between a torrid campaign, a quick break for marriage to a Bombay businessman. And the wedding present: a triumphant entry into the Lok Sabha. For **Deepika Chikhalia**, the switch from electronic epics to political hardball seems to be ordained. But now's the hard part: performing in Parliament.

Deepika's wedding

HEMANT PITHWA





Brahmachari: feeling the heat

YOGI CRASH-LANDS

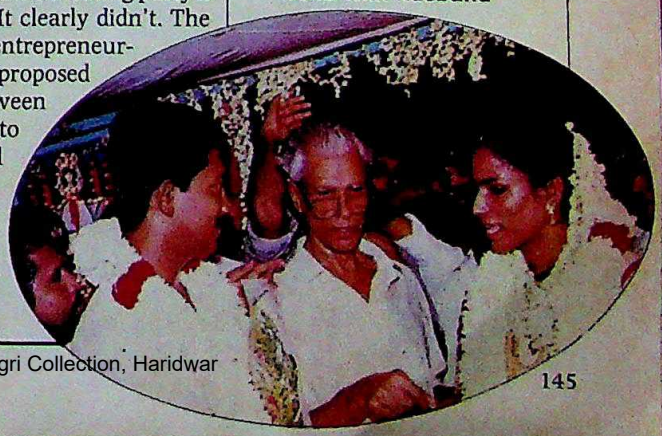
◆ His Yoginess clearly isn't as potent a power as he was during Mrs Gandhi's reign but his penchant for hitting the headlines is still extant. Barely days after the Narasimha Rao Government took over, customs sleuths raided several establishments belonging to **Dhirendra Brahmachari**. The items confiscated included sophisticated broadcasting equipment imported from abroad, which the controversial swami weakly claimed was for the purpose of yoga research.

He then went on to accuse his arch-rival for Swamidom, Chandra Swami, of engineering the raids. "This was only to prevent me from coming back to power now that my old friends are back at the helm of affairs," he charged. But the old friends looked the other way and the swami was reduced to dropping hints that he had accumulated enough dirt to embarrass the ruling party if push came to shove. It clearly didn't. The raids have clipped his entrepreneurial wings and with his proposed air taxi service between Delhi and Jammu still to take off, the bearded Brahmachari is having a tough time keeping his head in the clouds. Maybe some yoga will help.

BACK ON TRACK?

◆ Track queen **P.T. Usha** hung up her spikes this year with the title of India's best athlete still unchallenged. "It's goodbye to the tracks. I've changed my field," she quipped before her April wedding. But by year-end, Usha was dropping hints that she could be back. There's still gold in them thar heels.

Usha with husband



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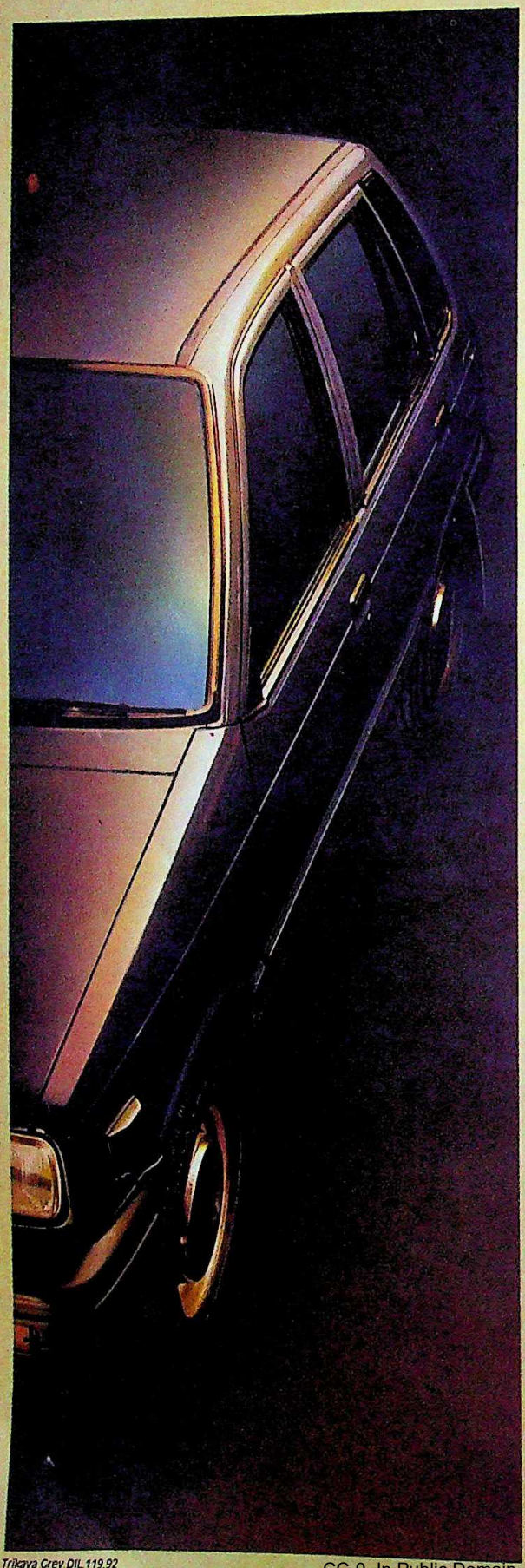

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"I want to go to school and I want to study. I miss having friends to play with."
—B. SHYAMLEE
Child actress

MINOR SUCCESS

◆ "I want to go to school and I want to study," she says, like any other five-year-old would. But she's certainly no ordinary toddler. In fact, she's Indian cinema's littlest superstar and also happens to be the country's youngest income tax payee. In the words of director Maniratnam: "She's a born actress, a rare natural."

Her captivating performance as a retarded child in *Anjali* has brought instant fame and not inconsiderable fortune. The cherubic child prodigy is already charging Rs 2.5 lakh per film. And, with 20 movies in her chubby little hands and the National Child Artiste Award under her belt, **B. Shyamlee** has certainly got bigger things on her mind than swotting in schoolrooms. Unless, of course, it's for another film role.

A MATCHED PAIR

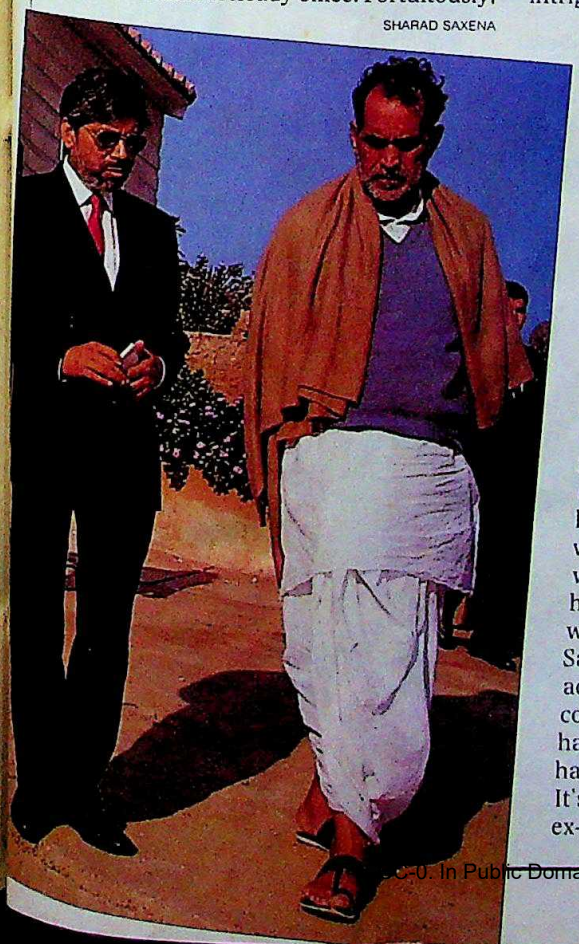
◆ **Uma Gajapati Raju**, the sensual south Indian politician, lost her moorings somewhat with Rajiv Gandhi's death. But seems to have rediscovered them after a quiet marriage to film maker Ramesh Sharma. Says Uma: "It's nice having one of India's greatest film directors direct your life."

Uma and Ramesh

THE BABA OF BHONDSI

◆ It's hard work being prime minister. Even harder when you're out after a mere seven months in heady office. Fortuitously, Chandra Shekhar had a ready-made retreat to retreat to: Bhondsi. The obscure piece of rocky real estate 45 km from Delhi had, overnight, become the focus of political intrigue and power with its bearded occupant preferring its sylvan surroundings to the imperial officiousness of South Block. Its once-serene setting—a few cows, ducks and dogs, and paddle boats on a placid lake—was rudely invaded by a swarm of black cats, bullet-proof cars and a constant parade of politicians and favour-seekers.

SHARAD SAXENA



Bhondsi is now bigger and more bountiful. Another 35 acres were added when Chandra Shekhar was prime minister. It has also returned to its original obscurity, as has its owner. From supervising the fate of the country, Chandra Shekhar found himself clambering up a different kind of ladder and supervising construction work at Bhondsi, with his party being virtually wiped out in the Lok Sabha elections. As he admitted: "Running the country was easier. You only had to give instructions. Now I have to get all the work done myself." It's obviously harder work being an ex-prime minister.

REVERSE ORDER

◆ Love, marriage, and babies. That's the traditional way of the world. But superstar **Kamalahasan** decided to be different and do it the other way around. He and Sarika produced their first child five years ago and a squealing sequel followed soon after. Only when all that was over came wedlock, early this year. Declared the belated bridegroom: "We merely formalised the relationship."

Sarika and Kamalahasan

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Simi with Rajiv: focusing on the right stuff

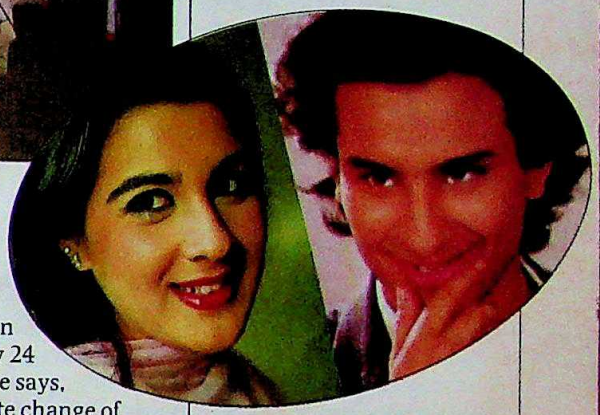
A MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION

◆ It wasn't quite Rajiv's India. Instead, it was Simi's Rajiv. When former film star Simi Garewal released the first part of *Rajiv's India* on the video circuit, it was criticised for the overtly favourable focus the lady had chosen to shoot it in. As a self-confessed admirer of the then prime minister, she shrugged aside the barbs.

But Part Two was dramatically different. Her second effort finally got the recognition it deserved—and the telecast it had been denied when the Great Man was alive—on Doordarshan. "I had only 24 hours to get sponsors" she says, referring to the last-minute change of heart by Mandi House. But, in the emotional aftermath of the assassination, sponsors sprang out of the woodwork and *Rajiv's India*, completed just before his death, was a moving tribute to the slain leader.

SECRET LOVE

◆ He was 21, a newly-arrived playboy. She was 27, a strong silent type who had quietly become a successful actress. But the secret wedding between **Saif Khan** and **Amrita Singh** caused major convulsions in the Pataudi family with Saif's mother Sharmila denying the wedding, and then sheepishly blessing the newly-weds when it became public. Said Saif: "It was dumb. But we didn't know how they'd react."



Amrita and Saif

TASTING THE THUNDER

◆ It was one bouncer the cricket superstar found difficult to duck under. **Kapil Dev**'s house-to-house advertising campaign for Lehar Pepsi saw him tasting a bit of thunder from Parle. Pepsi's soft drink rival released an earlier advertisement Kapil had done endorsing Thums Up. The combative cricketer took the matter to court, accusing Parle of breach of contract. There was really no question about where his loyalties lay. Said Kapil: "I'd like to associate with Pepsi because it's a bigger thing."

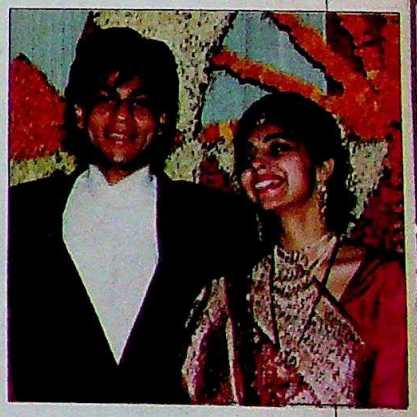
Kapil plugging Pepsi

"I don't know what the fuss is all about. I'd like to associate with Pepsi because it's a bigger thing."

—KAPIL DEV
Cricketer

BROKEN HEARTS

◆ As hero of the tele-serial *Fauji*, **Shah Rukh Khan** became a heart-throb. But hysterical teenagers were in tears when he upped and married. "I don't think I've broken any hearts," he said later. Marriage has obviously brought modesty.



Shah Rukh with wife

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STAYING IN THE BACKGROUND

◆ It was as poignant a moment as it was symbolic. On one side of the stately Durbar Hall in Rashtrapati Bhavan stood the forlorn figure of **Sonia Gandhi**, making her first public appearance a month after the funeral of her assassinated husband. On the other, a gaggle of politicians, many of whom were still intent on dragging her into the political whirlpool for their own selfish survival.

She could hardly hold back the tears as she walked back after receiving the Bharat Ratna, awarded posthumously to Rajiv Gandhi. For a split second, the fragile facade crumbled. But the stiff upper lip and deadpan expression was quickly in place when the politicians surged forward to pay their respects and indulge in characteristic obeisance.

Later, when journalists cornered her as she left, demanding to know if she would contest from Amethi, she merely averted her face. But the recently-bereaved widow had clearly made up her mind.

That was, in fact, the last time she appeared in public, limiting her engagements to greeting visiting dignitaries in the privacy of 10 Janpath or chairing closed-door meetings of the Rajiv Gandhi Trust. Apart from a brief comment to a Gulf-based newspaper, she has studiously avoided giving interviews, preferring to spend time with close friends and her weekends at the family's farm on the outskirts of Delhi.

> "The tragedy that had befallen my children and myself does not make it possible for me to accept the presidentship of the party."
>
> —SONIA GANDHI

SHARAD SAXENA

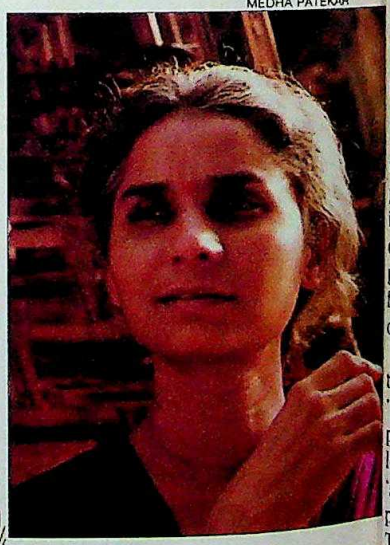
Sonia: keeping a low profile

REWARD FOR RESILIENCE

◆ As the Iron Lady of India's environmentalists, Medha Patkar has galvanised the ecological movement. Her battle against the controversial Narmada project has revealed, beneath the trademark threadbare khadi sari, the true courage of a crusader. By taking on three state governments and organising the people threatened by the proposed Sardar Sarovar Dam into a formidable force, Patkar has successfully merged the issue of basic human rights with the threat of ecological destruction In the bargain, she has become an international celebrity.

Recognition of her contribution came in 1991 with the movement she heads, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, recieving the Swedish Right to Livelihood Award, known as the alternative Nobel. Patkar's reaction was typically her: "We're happy but such awards can change attitudes." Not hers, though. A week later, she was back in battle with her arrest over a protest rally she had organised. The flood of disapproval from all over the globe led to her release the next day. International recognition, it seems, does help.

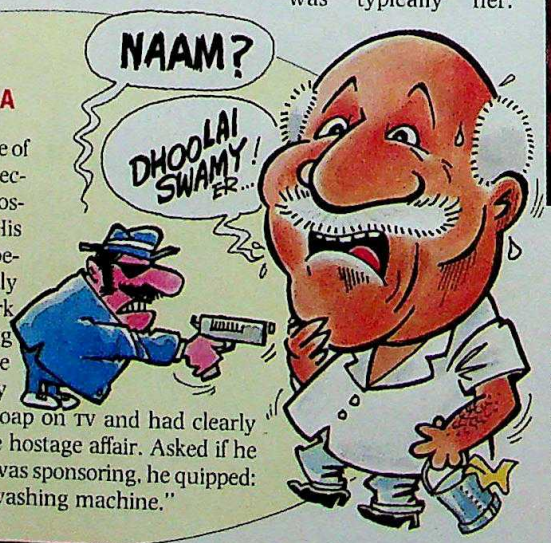
MEDHA PATEKAR



Patkar: making waves

HOSTAGE DRAMA

◆ Terrorism pays. For some of its victims, at least. Indian Oil Director K. Doraiswamy was taken hostage by Kashmir militants last June. His position ensured that he quickly became a cause celebre. He was finally released and was next seen in a dark alley being tailed by a sinister-looking man who only wanted to know the name of his laundry. Doraiswamy wound up plugging a new soap on TV and had clearly washed his hands of the hostage affair. Asked if he used the product he was sponsoring, he quipped: "No. I use a washing machine."



Cartoon by JAYANTO

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Dilshad Khan; indignant denials

and Dilshad Khan, the stunning sister of actors Feroze and Sanjay Khan.

The Pakistan tabloid press sent down the first bouncer when it splashed juicy stories about Sharif's alleged romance with "an Indian beauty" without naming her. Alleging the partnership had blossomed in Islamabad when the two met at a friend's wedding, the media spoke about a romantic getaway to a nearby hill resort and lengthy love talk on the STD between the two countries. Though it gave Indo-Pak ties a new meaning, it was the Ambani-owned *Sunday Observer*, under its new editor Pritish Nandy, no mean publicity hogger himself, who took the story to new highs. The paper front-paged its own story naming Dilshad as Sharif's secret lover. Dilshad was not amused. Flatly denying she had ever met Sharif, she slapped a libel suit against the *Observer*. Indo-Pakistan relations haven't quite been the same since.

"My life has been made miserable by the gossip and whispering that appears to be the unfortunate fate of a single woman."

—DILSHAD KHAN

LONG-DISTANCE LOVER

◆ It was one Indo-Pakistan tie that threatened to produce a sensational partnership and some big hitting. Certainly, the big shots were there all right. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, no mean cricketer himself,

PRETTY WOMAN

◆ As a villain, he brought new dimenions to what had become a stereotyped roles. His portrayal as an effeminate, overtly gay baddie in *Mast Kalandar* confirmed his credentials as one of the most accomplished and versatile performers on the silver screen. But as a femme fatale? Well, that's literally another story.

In fact, a *Cine Blitz* story. The innovative film magazine's April issue screamed "scoop" and featured a gorgeous female pouting sexily on its cover complete with long eyelashes and glossy lipstick. The 'scoop' was the alleged identity of the person, actress Sridevi's "long lost sister". The missing sis held forth in an "exclusive interview" on what it was like living in the shadow of a famous actress. But the real scoop was still to come. Sridevi's sister was none other than **Anupam Kher**, dolled up to look like a woman, and a stunning one at that. As an April Fool's Day take-off, it hit the beauty spot. Kher clearly enjoyed the joke the most. "If Dustin Hoffman can do it, why not me?" he pouted, referring to the *Tootsie* role. Kher, however, would have done better in *Pretty Woman*.

GAUTAM RAJADHYAKSHA/Cine Blitz

Anupam Kher

R.N. Goenka

078607

◆ **R.N. Goenka**, 87, owner of *Indian Express* chain, who made more headlines than he contributed. Media world won't be the same.

Durga Khote

◆ **Durga Khote**, 86, veteran film and stage actress who did some memorable roles. Retired in 1976 after acting in 300-odd films.

G. Aravindan

◆ **G. Aravindan**, 55, the neo-realist film-maker who who shot to fame with his low-budget movies.

Nutan

◆ **Nutan**, 54, the '50s most popular heroine. She is best remembered for her role in *Sujata*, a poignant story of an untouchable girl.

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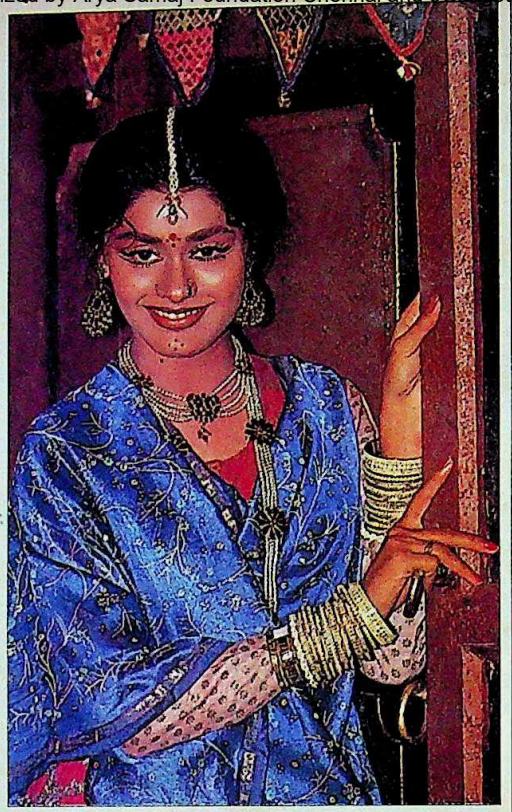
QUEEN OF THE SMALL SCREEN

◆ She won her first acting award at age four. But the talented **Pallavi Joshi** had to wait 20 years before she finally found fame and fortune. In that "awkward period", Joshi's talents were honed by directors like Shyam Benegal and Govind Nihalani. And it showed. Now a delectable 22, Joshi has fairly sizzled across the small screen like a meteor in overdrive, bringing a brash sensuality and illumination to her performances.

Her portrayal of Mriganayani, the liberated 15th century tribal queen, earned her critical acclaim and a flood of offers. Says she: "The viewership of one prime-time episode is equal to a silver jubilee hit film." Despite that, she's looking for bigger things. The cinema world is where her next conquest is aimed, having already signed up for six feature films. Her legion of fans, mostly drooling males, can't wait to see her sizzle in 70 mm too.

> "Television has made me what I am today. The viewership of one prime-time episode is equal to a silver jubilee hit film."
>
> —PALLAVI JOSHI, *Actrers*

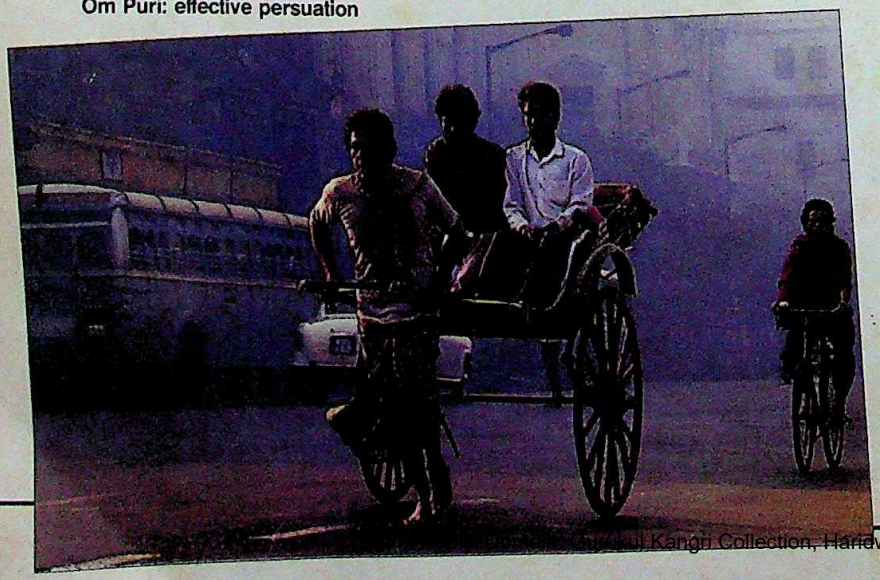


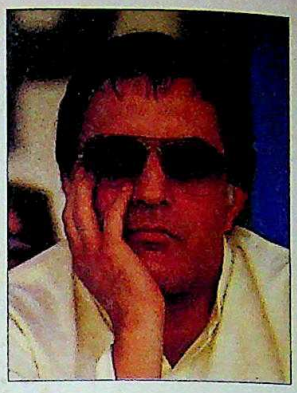
Joshi: small screen success

EFFECTIVE PERSUASION

◆ Dressed in a tattered lungi and vest, the rickshaw puller padding along the potholed streets of Calcutta wasn't getting much joy. Or any fare-paying passengers either. In fact, Om Puri was merely getting in shape for his role in Dominique Lapierre's *City of Joy* directed by Roland Jaffe. But the filming ran into a red brick wall as the city of joy and its Marxist rulers turned against the film and its "warped depiction" of the city, as angry citizens claimed. Puri's plea to the protestors ("Why are you depriving me of my bread and butter") seemed to have helped. Eventually, peace was restored and filming went on. Om Shanti.

Om Puri: effective persuation





M.A. Khan Pataudi

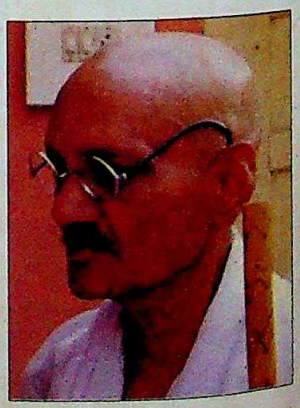
◆ For the natty nawab, it wasn't quite cricket. Uneasy with the heat and dust of electioneering, the Bhopal Congress(I) candidate lost his wicket—and deposit.

◆ Star Wars it was called. **Shatrughan Sinha** vs **Rajesh Khanna**. And Star Bores as the speeches began. Then, the Delhi poll got cancelled.

Rajesh and Shatrughan

◆ He looked the part. Granny glasses, walking stick. But **M.L. Mahatma Gandhi**'s poll bid flopped. Gandhi in name, no fame.

M.L. Mahatma Gandhi



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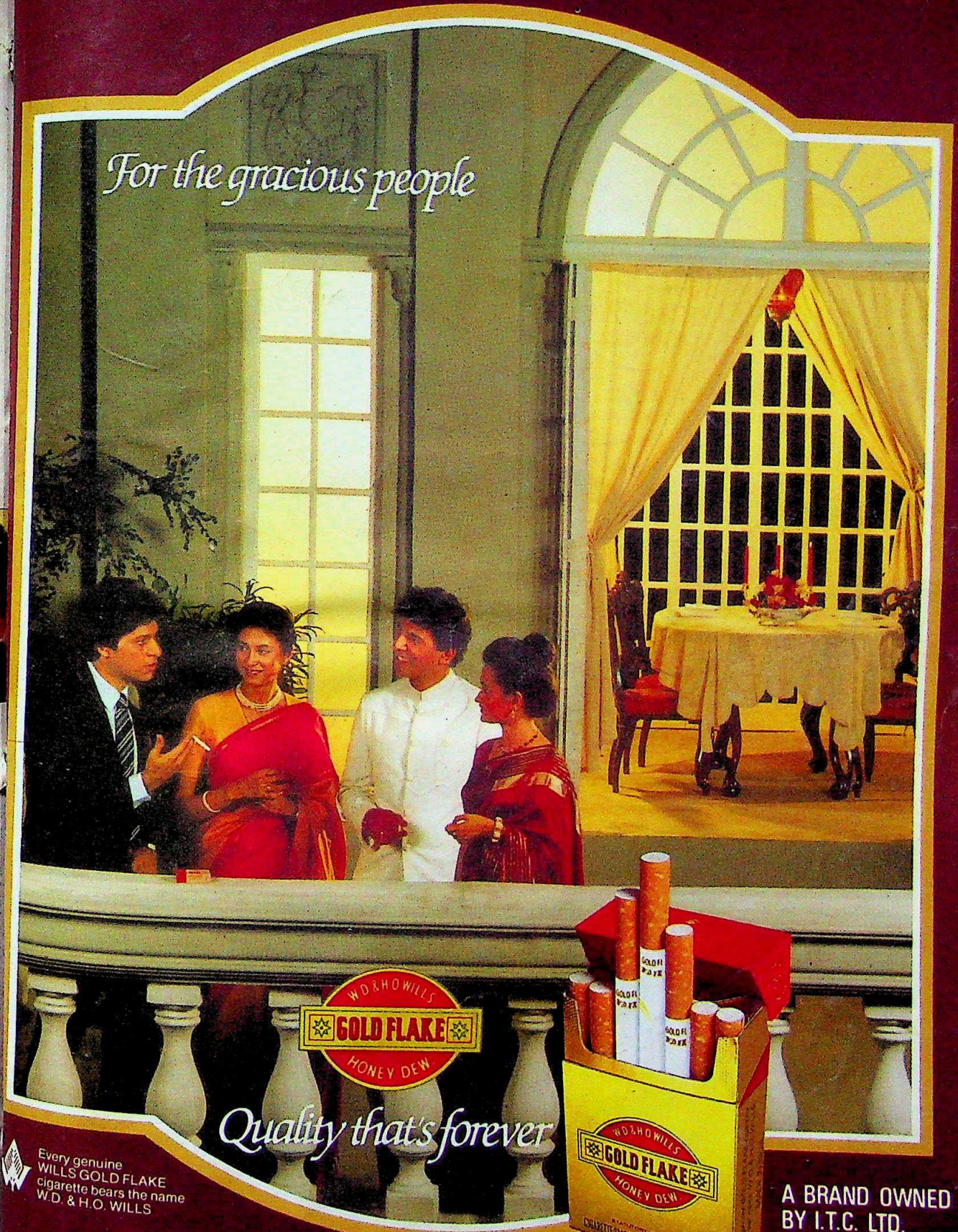

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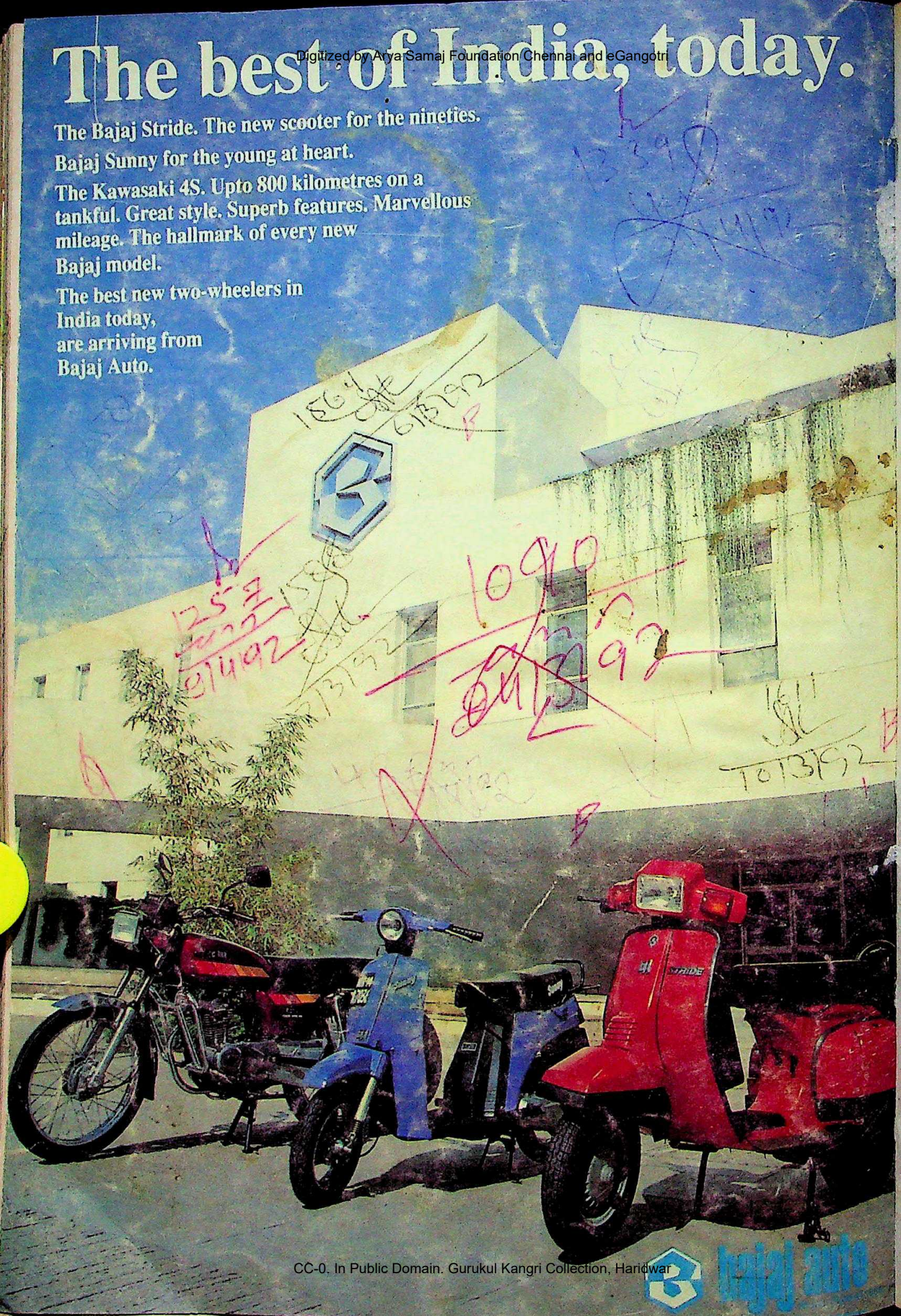

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